



Speech by

Mr M. ROWELL

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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BURNETT REGION

Mr ROWELL (Hinchinbrook—NPA) (6.46 p.m.): I rise to lend my support to this motion, which in itself shows the massive neglect of the Burnett region. For the benefit of members opposite, whom I have noticed from regional newspapers and correspondence are somewhat geographically challenged, I point out that Maryborough and Hervey Bay are part of the Wide Bay region and not the Burnett region. As we know, Labor is desperate to win back those seats and is throwing money and projects at them hand over fist. And that is good for them. However, the Burnett has been neglected, and this motion shows graphically how great that neglect has been.

This can't do Beattie Government has brought new meaning to the word "procrastination". This Government cannot make a tough decision. This is a Government that cannot deliver the big projects and a Government that is slowly but surely stifling regional development. This is a Government that is strangling the Burnett. There is no greater example than the go slow tactics of the Beattie Government, which have killed the \$1.4 billion upgrade of the Tarong Power Station.

Tarong has been waiting since June for approval of this project. This morning the Minister refused to deny that Tarong Energy was making a penalty payment to contractors of \$88,000 per day. I noticed that he again said nothing about it. He refused also to deny that, if the expansion does not proceed, Tarong Energy will be forced to pay \$4m for non-performance of that contract. Once again, he said nothing about that. The Minister's refusal only confirms that this Government's inactivity was a deliberate attempt to tilt the playing field. This is in spite of the former Treasurer's statement in April that Tarong should get on with the job. On 15 April he told the Parliament, "If the board has signed off on an agreement, then I would fully expect that the board would execute that agreement and get on with the job." But earlier this month US company Entergy pulled out of the joint partnership with Tarong Energy for the expansion project, citing problems with delays in Government permits. The report to the Beattie Government by the Australian Gaslight Company suggests that a go-ahead for coal-fired power projects could threaten the viability of the Chevron gas pipeline. Those comments reflect the view of the Premier, who over 12 months ago criticised the coalition's backing of Tarong's project.

It is no wonder that these comments and the Beattie Government's procrastination over Tarong have set major suspicion amongst the coal-based energy sector. The ongoing problems with the Tarong expansion through the penalty payments—something which the Minister refuses to deny—and the fact that there is now no commercial partner adds even more weight to the coalition's repeated demands for a clear policy statement from the Beattie Government. At the moment a number of major investors are ploughing massive sums of money into power stations which may simply have no future. The Beattie Government should give all players in the energy industry a clear statement of just where it stands before even more damage is done to our reputations amongst some of the biggest companies in the world. The frustration was summed up by the senior Entergy executive in the Courier-Mail on 7 September when he said—

"It would be great if they"—

the Beattie Government—

"came out and said something, but they haven't."

He went on to say—

"As we progressed in the evaluation of this particular project we decided it was not a venture we could continue to pursue."

Mr McGrady: Who's "we"?

Mr ROWELL: This is Entergy. That is a summarisation of the unpredictability of the Queensland power market. He could not understand what was going on in Queensland and the people opposite are the ones who are in Government driving the whole process.

Mr Elder: Who is "he"?

Mr ROWELL: The senior executive of Entergy.

Mr Elder: What was his name?

Mr ROWELL: I do not need to tell the member opposite. He should know. Why does he have to ask me? He does not even know his name, either.

Time expired.
