



Speech by

**Mr N. ROBERTS**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

---

Hansard 15 April 1999

### **ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY**

**Mr ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (6.18 p.m.): I second the amendment moved by the honourable member for Mount Isa. The Labor Government inherited an electricity system which over the 1997-98 summer period, under the coalition Government, experienced an annoying series of blackouts due to insufficient reserve capacity in the system. To make matters worse, the then Minister secretly withheld information from the public about many other potential blackout problems.

Those problems had been predicted by the Goss Government in 1995, when it prepared a blueprint for the State's electricity requirements for the years 1998 to 2006. To meet the requirements in 1998, the then Goss Government initiated the refurbishment and recommissioning of two power stations—at Collinsville and Callide—and also purchased 49 MW of power generated from sugar mills. To meet the requirements in 1999, then Goss Government Minister Tony McGrady commissioned the construction of a 500 MW interconnector between Queensland and New South Wales, which became known as Eastlink. The construction of that link would have been completed on 1 October 1998 and been fully operational on 1 January 1999 were it not for the coalition's meddling.

To meet demand for the years 2000 to 2006, the Government planned to conduct a competitive tendering process during 1996 for the addition of new peak generation capacity for use in the years 2000 to 2002 and new base load plants in the years 2003 to 2006. With that sound Labor strategy in place, the coalition entered power and took immediate steps to cancel Eastlink, putting the future of Queensland's electricity supply market under enormous strain.

Under the coalition, we had so many variations. We started with Eastlink and we ended with Westlink. In between we had northlink, southlink, overlink, underlink. In fact under the coalition, the whole thing became known as "the missing link". However, since returning to office last year, the Minister for Mines and Energy has taken positive steps to ensure that the lights stay on in Queensland. Firstly, steps were taken to ensure that the Calvale to Tarong transmission line was completed in advance of the summer peak period. This line reinforces the high voltage link between central and southern Queensland, allowing an extra 220 megawatts of electricity to be brought into the south-east area of the State. Secondly, the Government has worked with Powerlink to accelerate the new interconnector between Queensland and New South Wales. It was scheduled for commissioning in late 2001, but has now been brought forward to be commissioned in early 2001.

Since this Government came to office, two peak load power stations, totalling 440 megawatts, have come on line in Townsville. Two further peak load stations, totalling 112 megawatts, have been commissioned in Roma and at Swanbank, taking the State's reserve capacity from 21% to 30.6%. That is a significant achievement in a very short period. Looking to the future, construction of a 303 megawatt gas fired power station at Oakey is well under way, with commissioning scheduled for January 2000. Construction is also progressing on schedule at Callide, where the first 420 megawatt unit is scheduled for operation in May 2001 and the second unit will come on line in December.

There are also proposals for a further 6,000 megawatts of capacity currently under consideration in Queensland, with announcements to be made on several exciting proposals over the coming months. I will just name a few: Millmerran, Tarong, Kogan Creek, Wambo and Swanbank are all planning major power stations and they are well advanced with their proposals. All of these projects have the potential to not only deliver further base loading to Queensland's power system, but deliver jobs and attract industry to this State.

Yesterday's announcement of the PNG gas agreement also boosts the Government's hopes that a base load power station will locate in north Queensland, driving regional employment and development. During the past nine months under the Labor Government, there have been major improvements in our electricity system. We have increased reserve capacity, there has been no load shedding and there is honesty about the reserve capacity in the system. This is an industry which will continue to grow to meet the demands and expectations of all consumers in the State.

---