



Speech by

**Hon. T. McGRADY**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA**

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Hansard 15 April 1999

### **ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY**

**Hon. T. McGRADY** (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.12 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Delete everything after 'House' and insert—

'commends the Minister for Mines and Energy for his management of the Queensland electricity supply industry and bringing about greater accountability to the people of Queensland.'."

The member for Moggill has a hide to stand up in this place and criticise the Government's performance in relation to the electricity industry. He was the little "Sir Echo" who followed the former Treasurer all around the place as she ripped and stole \$800m out of the Queensland electricity industry. As the then Parliamentary Secretary, the honourable member was part of that great conspiracy, yet tonight he had the hide to criticise the positive steps that this Government is taking.

The honourable member for Moggill also had the hide to speak about Tarong. I can tell him something about Tarong. The member was in the Cabinet when it held a meeting in the Barambah electorate; the coalition knew that it was going to lose the seat. The proposition had not even gone before the board, yet the honourable member and his former leader announced that there would be extensions to the Tarong Power Station. The member was simply playing politics, as he always does.

In recent years, something has been missing from the Queensland electricity industry and that has been accountability to the people of this State. That accountability has been missing because the industry was gutted and thrown into a shambles by the former coalition Government, in particular by the former Treasurer and the member for Moggill. The agenda of the former coalition was to flog off the electricity industry to the highest bidder. They did not care who the highest bidder was or where it came from. All they wanted to do was sell off the State's assets. This Government is not playing the same games that the former Government wanted to play.

The structure under which the industry is working today was put in place by members opposite and their cohorts. What happened? It split up the industry into three and it created a system whereby the three generating boards—all owned by the State Government—could not even talk to each other and discuss major industry issues. What happened? If a unit went down at Stanwell, Tarong did not have a clue. What did we have? Seventeen potential blackouts in three months! At the time, the former Parliamentary Secretary did not even know that the State was in crisis, yet tonight he had the hide to stand in this place and criticise this Government. There was no coordination in the industry which the honourable member set up—no coordination at all—and yet he stood in this place and criticised the work that this Government has done. The restructuring that we will have in place on 1 July will make this industry more accountable to the people of this State.

Opposition members speak about retrenchments in the industry. They say that our restructure will result in jobs in the bush being lost. These are the same people who would have put in excess of 3,000 of our fellow Queenslanders who work in the Queensland electricity industry on the unemployment scrap heap, yet they have the hide to issue press releases claiming that the restructure will create further unemployment. Every member opposite is a hypocrite. They do not have a clue what this industry is all about.

In the short time the Beattie Government has been in office, we have been rebuilding an industry of which everyone in this State can be proud; an industry such that, when people go to switch

on their lights, the lights come on. That is unlike what happened under the former Government, which ripped \$800m out of the Queensland electricity industry. While I have breath in my body, they will never be allowed to forget about that. They committed the greatest act of political treachery ever perpetrated on the people of this State when they abandoned the plan for Eastlink. They had been back in office for only a few short weeks before they again changed their decision. They did not have a clue back then about what was happening in the industry and they do not have a clue now. The Beattie Government has done a damned good job in this industry. We have the confidence of the people who work in the industry. Once again, the Queensland electricity industry will be a great industry.

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