



Speech by

Mr R. QUINN

MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC

Hansard 20 June 2000

FUEL SUBSIDY SCHEME

Mr QUINN (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (6.45 p.m.): I rise to support the motion before the House. What we have seen in the last week or so is another startling own goal by the Treasurer of Queensland. He is the Minister who tried to tear up half the railways in western Queensland. He tried to put in place a koala tunnel. Do honourable members remember the eastern tollway? He has been involved with a number of other things. He was involved with the net bet affair. He was also involved in the school uniform allowance scandal. He is now involved in the petrol price fiasco—

Mr Hamill: What scandal?

Mr QUINN: Allowances, sorry.

Mr Borbidge: That was the one that wasn't a scandal.

Mr QUINN: That was the one he got right. Now we have seen the petrol price fiasco— another own goal. What we have seen here is a slick operation by the Government which has gone horribly wrong. Those opposite tried to convince everyone that there was a rort. The Government put advertisements on television and had endless press conferences saying, "We will stop the rort."

What happened? The public knew who was being rorted and they knew who the rorters were. The rorters were the Government. The people of Queensland quickly told the Premier that they did not want to pay 8.3c per litre more for their petrol and have some money taken off the cost of car registration. They saw it as a rort that was put on them by the Australian Labor Party, and rightly so.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the subsidy was not being passed on to motorists. I invite honourable members to look at the independent figures supplied by the ABS, the RACQ and any other organisation that independently examines fuel prices. Honourable members will see that the full price differential was being passed on to the people of Queensland over a full period of time—not a one-day period but over a full year—

Mr Borbidge: That includes the average price in country Queensland compared to the average price in country New South Wales.

Mr QUINN: Yes. This Government's trick was to come into the House one day and say, "We have done a ring around a couple of service stations in country towns and have come up with the startling news that the differential is not there." The reality is that when one looks at it over a period of time and takes the average country price in Queensland and compares it with the average country price in other States of Australia, the differential is there. Anyone trying to compare the price in Cunnamulla with the price in Bathurst might find that the differential has shrunk, but when one looks at the situation over a long period of time and averages it out, one will find that the differential is there.

There was no reason for the Government to attack the subsidy scheme, and the people of Queensland knew that. They knew that if the subsidy scheme was scrapped, over a period of time they would pay more for their petrol and they would also lose the advantage of cheaper registration fees. As I said, the only rorters here are those opposite. The people know that.

Much has been made of the fact that the coalition supposedly started the scheme that allowed the rorters to really get up a head of steam. I remind honourable members that when the legislation

setting in place the subsidy scheme went through this House it was supported by the Labor Party and praised by members opposite for the way in which it was being implemented. Yes, there was recognition that there was some cross-border trade. If one looks at the words of the current Deputy Premier in that debate, one will find that he acknowledged that there was about \$2m worth of fuel going over the border every week.

Mr Elder: What did you do about it?

Mr QUINN: Listen. This is what the now Deputy Premier said—

"The Treasurer came up with the revelation that petrol wholesalers were buying petrol in Queensland and selling it for higher rates in New South Wales. What a revelation! She spoke as if that were new. It is valued at \$2m a week. That has been going on for a long time. Blind Freddy could have told her that."

The Deputy Premier said that the problem started under the coalition Government. He has acknowledged that it was in place for a long time. The Deputy Premier has been in Government for 18 months. What has he done about it?

Time expired.
