



Speech by

**Mrs J. GAMIN**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Hansard 16 March 2000

### **FUEL ADDITIVES**

**Mrs GAMIN** (Burleigh—NPA) (7.13 p.m.): Back in November last year, I alerted the Minister for Fair Trading to an Australian Institute of Petroleum report on the significant increase in unscrupulous operators substituting low-excite products for petrol and diesel. The Minister's reply concentrated on the issue of diesel. Since 1994 it has been illegal to supply diesel with a flash point of 61 degrees Centigrade or less. This was decided in response to a trend at that time of adding low-excite fuel products, such as kerosene, to diesel.

Six service stations in Sydney were recently named for selling petrol with high levels of toluene and xylene. Other breaches of solvent substitution in petrol have been detected elsewhere in New South Wales and Victoria. Low-tax solvents are normally used in the paint industry, but they are also used in very small quantities in petrol. They attract a much lower excise duty than petrol's 43c a litre. I note that the Commonwealth has now decided to increase the excise on toluene in order to discourage the use of this solvent to adulterate petrol sold at the pump. Legitimate suppliers of toluene, which is normally used as a paint thinner, will then apply for relief or refund of this excise. This is a bandaid approach. Unscrupulous operators will no doubt find another substitute.

The Minister for Fair Trading has now announced that 22 Queensland trade measurement inspectors would be taken off other duties to collect petrol samples for analysis. It is my strong view that inspectors should be employed year round to catch petrol cheats to discourage unscrupulous operators from selling adulterated fuel. This becomes an even more important issue as bowser prices go through the roof. If motorists have to pay the exorbitant prices they are paying today for petrol, they at least deserve to know that the product they are buying has not been adulterated with some other cheaper additive.

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