



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 30 May 2000

ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (6.49 p.m.): I am pleased to support the amendment moved by the Honourable the Minister. This Beattie Labor Government has recently announced the most far-reaching and visionary policy for addressing this State's energy future. Since coming to office, one of the first priorities of this Government has been to address energy issues, particularly future energy requirements. We have not lost focus on that goal.

The Beattie Government's Queensland energy policy demonstrates our energy sector credentials. This strategy is a first for Australia—first in its vision, first in its scope of initiatives and first in taking decisive steps to address greenhouse. The policy delivers on the price benefits of the competitive energy market and on responsibly managing the greenhouse impacts of energy generation. This strategy will deliver major benefits for all Queenslanders. The policy will advance construction of essential gas infrastructure with a particular focus on delivering cheaper electricity and a competitive gas supply to the north of the State.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr LUCAS: It is fine for the member for Burdekin to talk about selling out the people of north Queensland. I would have thought, as a north Queensland member of Parliament, he would be interested in doing something that would benefit jobs in the north.

The Queensland economy will be strengthened and expanded, further delivering on the Beattie Government's commitment of jobs, jobs, jobs. I also add that this Government is committed to the continued support of the uniform tariff in Queensland and has this year budgeted \$250m for the uniform tariff CSO. There is a need to increase the uniform tariff by about 3%, but the electricity tariff in Queensland in real terms has fallen by 26% and has not been adjusted since March 1994. On the other hand, it is the mates of the member for Burdekin—the people he supports, the people to whom he gave his preferences, the Commonwealth Government—the Howard Liberal Government's 10% GST that represents a significant cost and slug to Queensland consumers and businesses.

Mr KNUTH: I rise to a point of order. The member for Lytton is misleading the Parliament. I did not give my preferences to the coalition.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr LUCAS: A 3% increase will still see Queensland prices remain among the lowest on a national basis. So the Opposition has got it wrong in relation to the Government's planned increase in retail tariffs.

Let us have a look at the strategy in detail. The Kyoto Protocol has a target of no greater than an 8% increase in greenhouse emissions above 1990 levels by 2008-2012. Twenty-nine per cent of this State's energy consumption is through electricity generation. So what do the rocket scientists on the other side of this House say, "It probably won't happen now." I suppose that is what they say in north Queensland, "I don't think there will be cyclones this season, kids. We won't worry about it. They probably won't come." I have news for members opposite. If we are serious about strategic planning for this State, we look at all alternatives; we look at what is likely to happen. Senator Hill is threatening to intervene in this State again. He intervened in the fisheries industry. He is threatening to intervene again in electricity. He is the one saying we are not going to have another gas-fired power station. He

wants Commonwealth legislative powers to intervene. What do members opposite say? "Don't worry, kids, it is not going to happen. It is all fine." That is the sort of strategy members opposite are offering businesses and the people of this State.

Time after time the Federal Government has intervened, and we are going to do something about it, because if members opposite were smart about strategic planning they would know that one of the most important things about regulation is that you do not just meet regulation; you do not move with regulation when it happens; you go before regulation. You say, "Where are we going to be in the future with environmental controls?" We want to be ahead of it so we do not have bolt-on solutions. We want to have a strategy that is ahead of it, because we want to make this State's energy supply secure not next year, not the year after, but in 20 years' time, and that is what this Minister's strategy is all about doing.

The Beattie Government proposal requires all retailers in Queensland to have 13% gas and 2% alternative by 2005. We will be supporting a base load gas plant in Townsville and working with the PNG gas pipeline developers for a Gladstone-Townsville pipeline. The member for Callide was saying, "We support this and we support that." If members opposite support this, they are supporting the policy, and they ought to support the policy because it is worth while supporting.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I have been consistently misrepresented by Government members tonight.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr SEENEY: I have been misrepresented, Mr Speaker, but none of these people listened to the speech I made.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr LUCAS: I reject out of hand that this Government is anti coal. The only thing that the Neanderthal from Burdekin shares with people is that he was around when coal was being created and laid down in the first place. We have 17 million tonnes of coal used in Queensland this year for power generation. After Callide C, Millmerran and Tarong North are operational, it will increase to 20 million tonnes. If that is not supporting the coal industry, I do not know what is. In fact, 97% of the electricity generated in Queensland is through coal.

As the Premier said in his statement, this is about diversity. This is about not placing all our energy eggs in one basket. That is why we are a Government for not 2001, not 2002, but 2020. The coalition has shown again that it is anti regional development. It is opposed to the tremendous opportunities that this policy opens up for development, in particular in Gladstone and Townsville.
