



Speech by

SHAUN NELSON

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

Hansard 4 October 2000

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT BILL

Mr NELSON (Tablelands—IND) (2.58 p.m.): I will keep my contribution brief because many members have already covered a lot of what I wanted to say. I intend to support this Electricity Amendment Bill. A lot of issues in relation to this subject need to be resolved. Many areas in my electorate in particular and in many other rural electorates still have a lot of problems in terms of establishing access to electricity grids. Many tablelands dairy farmers are still on a single wire earth return system. Given the fact that there is a major powerline running up the spine of the tablelands, this is a process that I would like to see addressed in the near future.

However, the issue that caught my attention when going through the Bill relates to the comments of the member for Nudgee, that is, independent arbitrators. As far as my constituents and I are concerned, that has not been a process that has been easily accessible in the past. Given my limited dealings with the offices of ombudsmen, regardless of what department they are dealing with, they are usually completely overburdened. At the moment there are backlogs. I do not have a complete and full understanding of the way the offices will work, and I ask the Minister to go through the process of how they will be selected and so on. I would find that very helpful.

I turn now to how regional disputes will be dealt with. If disputes can be dealt with in Cairns or Townsville—and this is my understanding of how it will work—that would be easier and better than the current system where the ombudsman is based in Brisbane. Therefore, anyone who complains to the ombudsman has to come to Brisbane. My understanding from reading the Bill and from previous discussions is that these arbitrators will be based in accessible areas throughout the State. I ask the Minister to comment on that also.

Ravenshoe on the tablelands has the Windy Hill project. I know that a few members of this House have seen that project. It is absolutely amazing. I for one am a huge supporter of what we call green energy. However, I think it is sensible energy. I have driven past those power generators many times.

Mr Hayward: You might have found a better word to describe it—"sensible" energy.

Mr NELSON: Seriously, these power generators cost very little money. I have talked to people at Stanwell. It looks spectacular as one drives through the Ravenshoe mist to see giant windmills spinning. They provide energy. They are cheap, efficient and are there forever. They need oiling perhaps once every 10 years. I believe that that is the most sensible use of that area. Stanwell, the Minister and his department are to be congratulated. However, we now need to extend that project. I am sure that Stanwell is looking to extend that project. Those who have come to me to say that it would be of great value to them are those who live on tropical islands such as Hayman Island, Hamilton Island, Green Island and all the islands off the coast of Cairns.

Mr Schwarten: They're on Horn Island.

Mr NELSON: Yes, Horn Island and other islands around Queensland. There are quite a few of them. I thank the Minister for that. I did not know that. I have not been to Horn Island recently. These power generators could be of great value to such areas during peak usage periods or cyclones when they are cut off from mainland supply grids for quite some time.

The tablelands is certainly at the forefront of these electricity issues. Everyone still lives in hope that a Tully/Millstream project may occur. However, there needs to be a place where people can go directly to speak about issues regarding electricity, land resumptions, usage, power blackouts and the damage that that can cause to equipment. I have not been provided with a copy of the Opposition's amendments, but I will be following the debate to its conclusion.
