



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

Hansard 30 May 2000

ELECTRICITY INDUSTRY

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (6.13 p.m.): I move the following amendment—

"Omit all words after 'House' and insert the following—

'congratulate the Beattie Labor Government on its cleaner energy policy which will provide balanced development of the energy industry in Queensland; ensure an ongoing supply of competitively priced electricity for the people of Queensland; contribute to the reduction of greenhouse emissions; and provide a base load power station in the north of the State.'."

Today is a great day for Queensland, because we celebrate two firsts in this Parliament: firstly, the shadow Minister asked his first question on mines and energy after holding his position for some six months; secondly, and more importantly, we have the opportunity today to discuss the first energy strategy covering all aspects of energy in this State for many a long year. I congratulate the Opposition for coming back to debating the real issues in this Parliament. Nothing can be more important to the economy of Queensland than the future energy needs of this State.

There have been major savings for those people who elected to become contestable customers. That is what members opposite and this Government advocate. This is what competition is all about. But the fourth tranche—the mums and dads of this State—is not scheduled to come into place until next year. Members opposite had a role to play in setting this timetable. Yes, there is a 3% increase which starts on 1 July. This is the first increase since 1994. The point I made this morning was that, if the price of electricity had increased by CPI, we would have had a 15% increase. That is what I said.

The point I want to make tonight, and which I made this morning, is that members opposite are talking about a 3% increase in power and in five weeks' time, when the GST comes in, what is it going to cost the mums and dads of Queensland? What will it cost the small businesspeople of Queensland? At least an additional 8%! Members opposite should not come in here and cry their crocodile tears.

At the outset of my address tonight, let me compliment the coal industry in this State, which has served the State well and will do so for many years to come. The policy which the Premier announced a few short days ago is all about a balanced use of power. It meets the needs and responsibilities in relation to the reduction of greenhouse emissions, as per the Kyoto agreement, which members opposite have never mentioned. Most importantly, it also provides the opportunity to build a base load power station in the north. It is all very well for members opposite to speak about the reduction in electricity prices. However, that is in the south-east corner of Queensland and it means nothing at all to the people of Callide or Gregory. We are about giving the same rates and privileges to the people of Burketown, Cairns and Townsville. That is what this Government is all about. If we took note of what the member for Callide was saying tonight, it would mean that all of the benefits of competition would come back down to the south-east corner. This policy is all about giving the people whom Vaughan Johnson represents the opportunity to share in the benefits of competition policy.

A base load power station in the north is not just about delivering cheaper power; it is about allowing industry to prosper and providing jobs for the people of the north. That is what this policy is all about. In the two years that Opposition members have sat opposite not once have they come forward with any realistic policies. They have sat back and criticised us and made no positive contribution to one of the most important debates taking place in this State. Before I conclude, I want to say—

Time expired.