



Speech by

HOWARD HOBBS

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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FUEL PRICES

Mr HOBBS (Warrego—NPA) (7.07 p.m.): One issue that annoys people who live away from the south-east corner of Queensland is the price variation of fuel. The worst example of a system gone wrong is that when the Eromanga fuel refinery plant west of Quilpie was in full production, the price of that diesel was cheaper in Brisbane than it was to locals in Eromanga, Quilpie or Charleville. The general price of fuel is much higher the further west and north one goes. For example, it is over 92c in Longreach and it is over \$1 in Birdsville.

Unleaded fuel is consistently over 90c a litre from Chinchilla west to Charleville with variations in between. Brisbane averaged about 78c this week. Brisbane prices this week have ranged from 71c to 87c for unleaded fuel, with Wednesday being the lowest and Saturday the highest and Sunday the second highest price. These fluctuations also occur at times in those western and northern areas of the state. Clearly, these wild variations indicate that opportunistic pricing is occurring.

Queenslanders are in a better position than those in the other states because it does not have a fuel tax. Even under the new taxation arrangements where the Commonwealth government collected the 12c and rebated it back to the Queensland government, the total figure rebated is in the vicinity of \$400 million. Unfortunately, the Beattie government is creaming off up to \$150 million of that fuel rebate which really belongs to Queensland motorists because of the complicated rebate process that they have to go through.

To summarise, it would appear that the oil companies are having a lend of us, the Beattie government while crying wolf is raking in the money and Queensland motorists are being short-changed. The Nationals would initiate a fuel price inquiry. Given the difference between the fuel price in Brisbane and regional and country Queensland is as much as 30c, motorists deserve a full and open inquiry. The coalition moved in state parliament to establish an all-party parliamentary select committee to inquire into the disparity of fuel pricing across Queensland and to make any recommendations necessary to ensure transparency and fairness in Queensland fuel pricing.

The Beattie government used its 66-seat majority to vote down the motion. That just proves that the Premier is more interested in media stunts than an inquiry. He has still failed to follow through on a promise he made in June 2000 to set up a committee to act as a watchdog on petrol prices in this state. On the same day the Premier also promised to conduct a royal commission into fuel prices in 18 months time if fuel prices continued to be unfair, but again he has not followed through and has walked away from yet another commitment. It appears that this government will do almost anything for a media stunt, but it never backs it up with a genuine attempt to follow through. The inquiry would give motorists an opportunity to find out the real story behind the fluctuating petrol prices and put in place measures to restore confidence and make fuel prices and fuel companies more accountable once and for all.

Time expired.