



Speech by

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PETROLEUM, GAS AND OTHER LEGISLATION BILLS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (8.23 p.m.): I am pleased to rise in this place this evening to support the Petroleum and Gas (Production and Safety) Bill 2004. This bill has a number of positive attributes. However, I also want to take this opportunity in the House to outline the relevant parts of the bill that the Liberal Party will be watching the implementation of with great interest. I want to begin by congratulating the minister for bringing forward a bill that, from what is presented, strikes a reasonable balance between the need for further industry in Queensland and creating a cleaner, more sustainable approach to industry and its relationship with the environment.

This bill recognises the extensive potential of coal seam gas by ensuring that it will be harnessed whereas before CH₄ or methane was let into the atmosphere. Coal seam gas has enormous potential and, as has been mentioned many times before, has a great capacity to take up the burden of Queensland's gas needs. This is evidenced by coal seam gas now accounting for 27 per cent of the state's gas needs, up from four per cent in 1998. This 27 per cent is set to increase further as there have been advancements made to current power facilities to accommodate gas. One such facility is the Townsville gas-fired power station which has recently been refitted to accommodate coal seam gas and hopefully will be fully operational soon. The balance with the environment is also a very significant plus to coal seam gas production and use. As opposed to coal-fired electricity, coal seam gas is a much cleaner form of power and undoubtedly will lead to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This means that as Queensland moves into the future we will be able to use the wide benefits on offer from coal seam gas and at the same time keep to an environmental regime that is sustainable.

Some of the new provisions in this bill provide a good basis for the coal seam gas provisions. The further development of coal seam gas as a resource on which Queensland can base its future energy distribution is important. This is achieved through this bill by providing an efficient and clear outline of the rules and expectations of those involved in the industry. As with all of these things, though, the government has its responsibilities as does the industry, and I want to make it clear that the Liberal Party will be watching to make sure that these responsibilities are fulfilled. The other very important issue in this new legislation is that of safety. The safety of workers and workplaces is very important, and the Liberal Party will always support measures that move to responsibly improve the safety of workers. The provisions in this bill, most notably those regarding inspectors, do improve the safety of workers while not being a hindrance to the industry.

The two aspects of the bill that require some attention, though, are the competition and compensation aspects. First with regard to the new provisions to allow for greater competition in exploration tenures, it is not that we are against the new competition provisions; it just flabbergasts me that the Labor Party can stand here advocating competition. It is akin to a Victorian saying that they are happy to see interstate sides win the AFL flag. For the Labor Party to be standing here advocating competition rather than a greater level of government control is very welcome, however. The Premier said in this place earlier in the year that the Liberal Party should keep following the Labor Party for our electoral success to improve. Well, based on this sudden ideological shift to greater competition, I must say that maybe it is the

Labor Party that is following the Liberal Party. Welcome aboard the free market train, Minister! We are happy to sell more tickets to these members opposite!

On a slightly more serious note, the Liberal Party will be watching closely to ensure that the set of rules laid out for compensation delivers a fair and equitable level of compensation to those affected. Though this bill represents an improvement on the previous compensation schemes, we will have to wait to see if these provisions can be improved after the implementation of the bill. Once again, the Liberal Party supports this bill in its attempts to harness the positives to come from coal seam gas exploration. However, we will be watching closely at some of the provisions in the bill.