



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

Hansard Tuesday, 19 October 2004

PETROLEUM (SUBMERGED LANDS) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (9.40 p.m.): I welcome Minister Robertson's statement in his second reading speech of this bill in which he reaffirmed that the Beattie Labor government is committed to preventing any exploration on the Great Barrier Reef. Last month in this House I expressed fears that the federal coalition had kept open the possibility of oil exploration in or near reef waters and that the Marion and Townsville plateaus just outside the reef were viewed as priority areas for petroleum drilling.

The federal member for Herbert, Peter Lindsay, responded the following day by saying that that would happen over his dead body. Two days later on Saturday, 2 October, the following letter was published in the *Townsville Bulletin*—

So Peter Lindsay will only allow the drilling for oil and gas on the Great Barrier Reef over his 'dead body'?

Past history (ie the port access road and the invasion of Iraq) has shown that Mr Lindsay will do a backflip on any issue if told to do so by Canberra.

Mr Lindsay's promise about drilling on the reef is as trustworthy and set in concrete as John Howard's promise that there would never, ever be a GST.

That letter was signed by John Holland of Charters Towers. Unfortunately, the federal election result has not put lingering doubts to rest. The objectives of the Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Amendment Bill are admirable. A uniform safety regulatory regime for Australia's offshore petroleum is in the interests of everybody who works in the industry. It is encouraging that agreement on the way forward has been reached with the Commonwealth after prolonged negotiations.

Although the only area of Queensland where an offshore lease has been granted lies in the Gulf of Carpentaria north-west of Weipa, it is necessary for Queensland to be in tune with the establishment and objectives of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority. Workplace health and safety should be paramount in all occupations. This bill gives greater impetus to safety in offshore gas fields whether in Commonwealth or state waters anywhere in Australia. It deserves the solid support of all members. I commend the bill to the House.