



Speech by

Andrew McNamara

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Hansard Wednesday, 23 March 2005

GREEN ENERGY, ERGON ENERGY

Mr McNAMARA (Hervey Bay—ALP) (10.39 pm): Last week I was delighted to attend a sod turning ceremony on behalf of the energy minister, the Hon. John Mickel, to mark the creation of Ergon Energy's \$23 million Green Energy Power Plant at the Isis Central Sugar Mill near Childers. Site preparation and bulk earthworks have been completed ahead of schedule, paving the way for the start of construction by Queensland based company I.Power Solutions in the first week of April this year. When fully operational, the cogeneration plant will turn tonnes of bagasse or sugarcane waste into environmentally friendly fuel and produce enough power annually to run 7,000 homes. The project is a partnership between Ergon Energy and the Isis Central Sugar Mill, which is owned by a cooperative of local growers.

The Isis cogeneration project reinforces the Queensland government's commitment to renewable energy. The Queensland government is diversifying the state's energy mix by encouraging investment in a range of areas, including gas-fired generation and renewables such as wind, hydro and biomass. Since the release of the Cleaner Energy Strategy in May 2000, we have seen investment in about 80 megawatts of renewable generation.

Mr Terry Sullivan: Eighty!

Mr McNAMARA: Indeed, as the member for Stafford reinforces, 80. That has delivered greenhouse gas savings of around 340,000 tonnes a year—the equivalent of taking 79,000 cars off the road. This project will be built on that track record. The project will also give a significant boost to the region's sugarcane industry and create between 50 and 100 new jobs during construction. This will provide significant benefits to the local economy and the electricity network and give Ergon Energy another way of generating green power. This is an efficient and ecofriendly way of utilising excess steam produced through the combustion of sugarcane residue and represents part of Ergon Energy's ongoing commitment to green energy initiatives.

This project will also provide an additional revenue stream for the canefarmers involved in the Isis cooperative and will help safeguard them against fluctuations that can be experienced in the sugar industry. Over the past few years Ergon Energy has developed the renewable side of its business to the point where it is now Australia's third largest trader in renewable energy certificates and is recognised nationally as a leading green power company. I wish to congratulate the minister, Ergon Energy and the Isis Central Sugar Mill for this important initiative for my region.