



Speech by

Carolyn Male

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

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NUCLEAR FACILITIES PROHIBITION BILL

Ms MALE (Glass House—ALP) (5.07 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Bill 2006. The Queensland government is proposing to progress the Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Bill to ban the development of nuclear facilities in Queensland, including uranium conversion and enrichment plants, nuclear fuel fabrication plants, nuclear reactors, spent fuel reprocessing plants and facilities used to store or dispose of material associated with the nuclear fuel cycle.

The bill's purpose is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people of Queensland. This bill, and the debate that we are having today, highlights quite clearly the difference between the coalition members, who are willing to support a form of power that is inherently dangerous and produces dangerous by-products, and Labor, which has a strong record of protecting the environment and protecting our residents. This bill will empower all Queenslanders with the right to seek court orders or declarations to stop or prevent an offence against the proposed legislation. There is no sunset clause within the bill that would lift the ban on nuclear facilities at a future date. I am really pleased to see that.

The bill specifically excludes from the prohibition the storage or disposal of radioactive waste material for research or medical purposes. That is consistent with the government's Smart State investments in medical and research infrastructure. The bill also has no effect on the Medical Radiation Technologists Registration Act 2001, which governs the registration of medical imaging technologists, nuclear medicine technologists and radiation therapists. Consequently, the bill will have no impact on the level of nuclear research or the application of nuclear medicine in Queensland. Also, the bill does not prohibit the operation of nuclear powered vessels in Queensland ports.

One of the bill's primary functions is to prevent the high-level health and safety risks associated with the operation of nuclear facilities. This issue has been the focus of recent media attention regarding pro nuclear activists' claims that current technology has made the construction and operation of nuclear facilities significantly safer than in past decades. Whilst improvements have taken place, it remains that no nuclear plant design can be regarded as comprehensively safe and disposal of radioactive waste still remains a significant issue. I have listened today to a lot of members on this side of the House talking about the issue of radioactive waste. It is an issue that concerns people in my electorate. In fact, people have been stopping me in the street over the past couple of weeks to talk about the issue of nuclear proliferation and what would happen if we ended up with facilities like that in our state. They are quite clear that they do not want them.

Furthermore, nuclear facilities in Queensland would require subsidisation which would impose a significant financial burden on Queenslanders. That is something that we all need to think about quite carefully when we are talking about energy costs and how people will be able to follow through with their family budgets. The recently released Switkowski report *Uranium mining, processing and nuclear energy* indicates the extent of this subsidy. It says that 'nuclear power would be between 20 and 50 per cent more costly to produce than coal or gas fired power'.

The formation of this bill has also been necessitated by the government's concern regarding safety risks involved with nuclear proliferation and the potential threat of terrorism. The government is advised

that actual cases of nuclear proliferation have not involved safeguarded facilities in countries which are signatories to the United Nations nonproliferation treaty. Proliferation in the past has involved illegal supply networks, secret nuclear facilities and undeclared materials.

Whilst it could be expected that measures would be put in place to prevent nuclear proliferation in Australia, including Queensland, a recent Massachusetts Institute of Technology study suggests that an international effort to reduce the proliferation risk is required. This should include reappraisal and strengthening of the current institutional underpinnings of the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards regime including sanctions. Until these newly strengthened measures have been established, the construction and operation of nuclear facilities in Queensland remain a risk to the safety of all Queenslanders.

The threat of terrorist attack is also a concern for the Queensland government. The release of radioactive material from an explosion at a nuclear facility would have catastrophic consequences. The Queensland government will monitor technology developments relating to the nuclear fuel cycle, including the installation and operation of planned nuclear power stations, the use of laser technology for enrichment and the geological disposal of nuclear waste. Until proper health and security measures and adequate institutional arrangements which guarantee safety are established, we will remain committed to the prohibition of nuclear facilities in Queensland.

I call on members opposite to sit down and really think about the consequences of supporting a nuclear industry in Queensland. We have seen reports that suggest that the Sunshine Coast and Bribie Island would be good spots for nuclear power stations. The member for Pumicestone talked about that in relation to Bribie Island. We were talking about this on the weekend with Jon Sullivan, the Labor candidate for Longman. We are all very concerned that no-one actually rules out having these particular facilities built in their area. I note that our local federal Liberal member has been quite dodgy in not answering the question. He will not come out and say that he does not want nuclear facilities in Queensland and that he definitely does not want them on the Sunshine Coast or Bribie Island. That is what he needs to do. That is what we all need to do.

It is our job to protect Queenslanders. It is our job to make sure that nuclear facilities are not built in Queensland ever. I call on those opposite to really think about this. They should listen to what their constituents are saying because they are saying to me that they do not want nuclear power stations in Queensland, and I am sure that they would say that to those opposite if they were out there talking to them about it. With those few words, I commend the bill to the House.