



Speech by

**Ronan Lee**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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## **NUCLEAR FACILITIES PROHIBITION BILL**

**Mr LEE** (Indooroopilly—ALP) (4.59 pm): I am delighted to rise to speak in support of this wonderful legislation. In my view, the use of nuclear power for any sort of electricity generation is quite simply insane. For the life of me I cannot figure out why sensible human beings think that it is a good idea to generate power in such a way that it creates by-products that remain poisonous to humans and every other form of life on the planet for tens of thousands of years. It raises the question, though: why is it that we are at this point considering this issue within the parliament today? I think the answer is pretty simple. Happily, the environment will be a very significant political issue at the upcoming federal election. More and more people are deciding to make their voting decisions and change their voting decisions on the basis of various candidates' and parties' views on protecting the environment.

John Howard, who I think we all understand is a politician who simply hates the environment, has worked this out. During his tenure as Prime Minister, he has had a woeful record on environmental issues. We only have to look at what he has done with Tasmania's forests and the shocking manner in which he pulled money from Queensland when we tried to strike a deal to outlaw broadscale tree clearing. Thankfully, the Beattie government came to the party on that one. But John Howard did not. I think John Howard's government has been quite woeful in its attitude towards Japanese whaling in the great southern ocean whale sanctuary. People suggest that John Howard has had some sort of conversion to an understanding about the importance of climate change. No, he has not. He still does not understand. What he does understand is—

**Mr Reeves:** The Newspill.

**Mr LEE:** That is exactly right. He understands the numbers. He understands that people care about the environment and that they care about climate change. John Howard thinks that, with the nuclear issue, he has the perfect green issue, the perfect political environmental issue. It is an issue upon which he can continue his government's woeful and destructive practices towards the environment while at the same time pretend that his policies are clean and green. To put it frankly, he wants to have his yellowcake and eat it, too. I think we all understand that Howard is no stranger to lying for political gain. His government has been described as mean and tricky. In fact, one of his federal ministers from Queensland has described him quite publicly as a lying rodent.

Howard has run the fictitious argument that nuclear power is in some way less destructive to the environment than creating electricity through traditional means such as coal fired power stations. He does this by looking at a very narrow part of the nuclear cycle. He takes a single period during the fuel cycle of uranium and decides that that is the period of time in which he will assess it. He looks at that and says, 'During this brief period, there are fewer greenhouse gases created than there are during the same period by coal fired power stations.' That is a joke. If we want to assess the climate impacts of any form of power generation, we have to do that from the beginning of the cycle to the end. We have to start with the mining. We have to factor in the milling, the transport and the enrichment. But, most importantly, the one thing that Howard does not want to talk about ever is that we have to factor in the costs associated with the long-term storage of the by-products.

In the history of the planet, only one nuclear power station has been decommissioned—Chernobyl. That is not what we could call a successful decommissioning. That means that, based on current technology, every other nuclear power station on the planet is going to have to run indefinitely. So once that power station passes the point at which it can usefully generate electricity, it will still have to be kept humming over, because there is no means by which we can stop the processes within the power stations and turn the darned things off. When we factor that into any equation, generating electricity through the use of nuclear power will always be worse for the environment and create more problems for climate change than any other form of power generation that we could comprehend. We have been taken for a ride by the Howard government and I for one am someone who is not happy about that.

I have to tell members that two people in my community who appear to be happy about it are the federal members of parliament whose electorates cover my electorate: the federal member for Moreton, Gary Hardgrave, and the federal member for Ryan, Michael Johnson. We have not heard a peep out of those two about the destructive effects of mining uranium and generating power by using nuclear power stations. I know what the constituents in my part of the world think about this issue. They do not want it. What are we getting from the two federal backbenchers, Hardgrave and Johnson? Absolutely nothing. They are two members of the federal parliament who on this issue, I have to say, are not sticking up for the views that are strongly held within their communities. That is the point that should be made on this issue within the parliament today. Clearly, Gary Hardgrave, the federal backbencher for Moreton, and Michael Johnson, the federal member for Ryan, do not have the ear of the Prime Minister. They do not have the ear of the cabinet. As a result, they are bad and weak community representatives. Quite frankly, I think my community has been cheated and taken for a ride not just by John Howard but also by Hardgrave and Johnson. Hardgrave and Johnson should do the right thing and step aside and give my community decent representation. I am looking forward to the representation that Moreton will get from Graham Perrett. I know the member for Mansfield is as well. I know that other members of parliament are looking forward to the representation that Ross Daniels will give the people of Ryan. The people in those electorates have had stuff all on this issue from Michael Johnson and very little from Gary Hardgrave, the federal backbencher for Moreton.

I am delighted to support this bill. I am one of those people who think it is wonderful legislation. As most members would know, I am one of those people who think that we should go even further. I would like to put on the record that I am looking forward to the day when we introduce legislation outlawing once and for all uranium mining in Queensland. I am also looking forward to the day when Queensland has some capacity to keep nuclear powered weapons of war—nuclear powered ships, weapons of war—outside the state of Queensland. But with those words, I am delighted to support this bill.