



Speech by

Rosa Lee Long

MEMBER FOR TABLELANDS

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COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

Ms LEE LONG (Tablelands—ONP) (3.24 pm): I rise to speak to the Community Ambulance Cover and Other Acts Amendment Bill. This bill amends a number of acts and includes changes to the Community Ambulance Cover Act 2003, the Electricity Act 1994 and the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2006 for minor and technical reasons and to stop the development of a retailer of last resort scheme for the gas market. There are other amendments in this bill including changes to the Breakwater Island Casino Agreement Act 1994 dealing with tenure arrangements that will assist with the settlement of land sale contracts adjacent to the marina precinct and amendments to the Lotteries Act 1997 that will help with the payment of prizes in some circumstances where a ticket has been lost. The State Financial Institutions and Metway Merger Facilitation Act 1996 will be changed to accommodate the Suncorp Metway and Promina merger. Finally, the Integrated Planning Act 1997 will be changed to provide exemptions in some cases where land is taken under the Water Act 2000 or the State Development and Public Works Organisation Act 1971 by agreement with the landowner.

The community ambulance cover amendments are aimed at ensuring the ambulance tax continues to be levied when full retail competition is introduced to the energy industry on 1 July 2007. That is so that this unfair, unjust and inequitable tax, which hits some Queenslanders multiple times and others not at all, can continue to be collected. The discriminatory way in which this tax has been forced on the community is an issue that still raises the committee's ire. That is no surprise, as this Beattie government tax flies in the face of the strong Queensland tradition of everyone getting a fair go.

I do support our ambulance officers to the hilt as they are our first responders in medical and accident emergencies and deserve our recognition, respect and support. However, they are being restrained from working to their full capacity because of a public health system that is shifting its burden onto our ambulance services.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order please!

Ms LEE LONG: These amendments are the result of the Beattie government going into full retail competition in the energy industry and the subsequent effects that will have on the collection of the ambulance tax through our electricity accounts. The bill enabling full retail competition was passed late last year. That enabled the Beattie government to sell off the name rolls of electricity consumers in Queensland, thus allowing other electricity retailers to enter the industry and compete with Ergon and Energex. It is expected to be similar to the Telstra process, which saw the federal government provider being faced with a flood of commercial competitors. I do not believe that this continual corporatisation and commercialisation of government services and essential infrastructure as represented by full retail competition in the energy industry will bring the expected benefits for Queensland. As recently as last week there were reports that the privatised British rail system could soon be renationalised by the British government because its promises of lower fares and an end to public subsidies, which privatisation was supposed to bring about, have instead resulted in the exact opposite, with fares doubling and public

subsidies tripling. Surely that casts a dark shadow over the entire commercialisation process being forced on our electricity industry, which underpins this bill.

This government needs to wake up, look and listen and see what is happening in those countries and places which have gone down this path before. Retail competition, whether in rail, power, water or any other government field, is a proven failure. It ends up costing the taxpayers more as they are forced to subsidise the profit motive that commercialisation introduces. I believe that the tax itself is unfair and the commercialisation process behind this specific amendment today is also gravely mistaken.