



Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 3 December 2008

MOTION: ELECTRICITY PRICES

Miss SIMPSON: I withdraw. Queenslanders now face up to a 14 per cent price hike in power prices. In July this year they had already copped a five per cent hike. Last year residents faced an 11 per cent hike, but businesses—many of them small businesses—faced up to a 400 per cent power price rise. Where does it end? Labor promised safeguards with the privatisation of retail electricity, but did it have safeguards? No. It has a minister in here who will take responsibility for nothing. The Labor government deliberately misled the people of Queensland. Not only did it say power would be cheaper; it also said it would ensure that there would be security of supply, yet a few years ago we saw it blaming possums.

A few years later with regard to the electricity price hikes the government blamed the drought. When water is flowing back to the power stations, do the prices come down in power supply? No. This government always has another excuse for why it wants to put its hands into the pockets of battlers, into the pockets of Queenslanders and into the pockets of small businesses who do not have the taxing powers of government to ensure that their bottom line balances. This government does not worry about the bottom line of ordinary Queenslanders who are facing extraordinary price hikes due to this government's mismanagement.

I will quote from the member for Ferny Grove's contribution to this parliament in October 2006. When giving glowing assurances about how the government would ensure there were safeguards before he walked away from those commitments, he stated—

Mr Speaker, the Code ensures mums and dads won't be talked into agreeing to terms that are not fair and reasonable.

I think a lot of people would say that a 14 per cent hike was not fair and reasonable. In the same debate he went on to state—

These identified benefits include potential reductions to the energy costs for urban residential and business customers and some coastal regional business customers,

I would like to see where they are. The businesses and the residents who have contacted me certainly are not talking about reductions in energy prices. The minister in bringing the legislation forward has misled the parliament.

Let me address some of the other issues that have been deliberate misleading by the minister for transport, who just spoke. He comes into this place and he says, 'You are going to promise to underground all the powerlines in Queensland.' Give this guy an inch and he will take a thousand miles as far as the truth goes. What we promised is that we would look at some of the suburban distributors, particularly where there were issues with trees falling down. Is that not an issue that needs to be considered? I think that should be an issue for public debate. We need to look at issues of safety and address genuine issues where there is a case for undergrounding. But Labor turns around and claims that every powerline in Queensland is going to be underground under our proposition. There is no balance and there is no truth from this government. This is from a bunch of ministers who are happy to sit on ministerial leather and yet not take responsibility for their actions.

The motion that the opposition has put forward tonight is about governments being responsible for their actions. It is about governments not hiding behind other regulators and saying that it has nothing to do with it. It is about it keeping its promises when it introduces legislation. Our motion is about keeping government accountable and making sure that the people have their power prices carefully considered and not pushed through by a government that does not care anymore about the battlers.