



Speech by

## Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 3 December 2008

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### MOTION: ELECTRICITY PRICES

**Mr HINCHLIFFE** (Stafford—ALP) (6.24 pm): I rise to support the Premier's amendment. Once again this is a policy of convenience from the opposition, though describing it as a policy is probably really an insult to those members in this place who have a passing acquaintance with the English language.

Just as he tried to do in the purified recycled water debate, the Leader of the Opposition is trying to get away with criticising the state government on the one hand but on the other squibbing out of nominating what level of increase he would support if elected. We have to assume he would pay for the lot. The real question is: what is the increase in the price of electricity that the Liberal National Party support for 2009-10? How much do they think the prices should go up?

**Mr Seeney:** Try CPI for a start.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I hear a bid. The price of CPI. I will take CPI. Any advance on CPI? I will take CPI. This government is committed to ensuring that consumers get a fair go when it comes to power. We have stepped in to help consumers before and we will do it again, if needed. We have increased the electricity rebate for pensioners and seniors from \$145 to \$165 to ease the financial burden.

**Mr Cripps** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** I warn the member for Hinchinbrook under standing order 253.

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** We established the \$3 million hardship scheme for those who have difficulty meeting the cost of their electricity and gas bills. We gave householders and small businesses in regional Queensland more than \$600 million last year to help keep electricity bills down. That is around \$1,000 per household.

For more than two years, the Leader of the Opposition has been side by side with the government supporting the Queensland Competition Authority process for setting electricity prices, just as he supported our historic decision to break the electricity retail monopoly through full retail competition. This is the real test for the Liberal National Party. What does the Leader of the Opposition's oxymoronic progressive conservatism mean? What do those opposite stand for? Are they pro market or are they tiptoeing down the path of some sort of plan to renationalise industry? Are they for a surplus or are they about recklessly blowing out the budget? What has been most interesting in this debate tonight is that only—

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Brisbane Central!

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** Only former Nationals have spoken on the motion. We have heard the members for Callide, Toowoomba South, Hinchinbrook, Maroochydore and Southern Downs. They are all former Nationals. Not one former Liberal has spoken. Until they started coming in like Brown's cows, only the B team of former Liberals were here to watch. Where is the member for Clayfield, I ask? He has been missing since question time. I know where he should be.

**Mr Rickuss** interjected.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Member for Lockyer!

**Mr HINCHLIFFE:** I know where the member for Clayfield should be. He should be off figuring out where the \$620 million this will cost will come from. The tally of promises has gone up by a billion dollars this week alone. At this rate, the unfunded promises of those opposite will top \$100 billion by Christmas when we include the \$65 billion we have tallied up earlier that they wanted to FOI to figure out how it got funded. There is \$35 billion that the minister for transport has identified in the debate tonight. Perhaps the missing member for Clayfield is going to suggest slashing the subsidy to regional electricity customers to pay for this profligacy. Can members imagine the barneys in a Liberal-National cabinet if that happened?

This is a draft decision from the QCA and the energy minister is encouraging people to have their say. It is important for industry stakeholders, especially consumer groups, to lodge submissions to the QCA during the public consultation period. We want people to have their say. The opposition has the chance to get on with consultation here and now. Here is the opposition's chance to say what it thinks the level should be. Go on! Tell us what you think! I heard the interjection that it should be CPI. Even if it is CPI, those opposite need to tell Queenslanders which part of the budget they will cut to find the \$300 million it will cost. Will it be teachers? Will it be doctors? Will it be police? Where will it come from? Where will the money come from? I commend the amendment to the House and condemn this 'policy free zone' opposition.