



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Wednesday, 24 November 2010

MOTION: CSG INDUSTRY

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (6.20 pm): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade. I commend the contributions of my colleagues on this side of the chamber, especially the member for Capalaba who reflected on the precautionary balance of progress. I think evidence of these precautions exists in the extensive assessments of the projects that are the subject of the discussion and debate around this motion.

After three years of environmental assessment, the Coordinator-General this year conditionally approved the Gladstone LNG project with some 600 stringent conditions. These conditions, which legally obligate the proponent to make good any negative impacts on groundwater bores, followed the Coordinator-General's rigorous environmental impact statement process designed to assess and mitigate any potential environmental, economic or social impacts associated with the project. After the project was assessed against the state's environmental legislation and policies and conditionally approved in May, it went on to be scrutinised under federal government environmental legislation and policies contained within the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. The Commonwealth minister's conditional approval applied more than 300 additional conditions to the project.

After two years of rigorous assessment under the same environmental impact statement process, the Coordinator-General conditionally approved the proposed Curtis LNG project in July—the second project. The Coordinator-General's approval included 600 conditions again, including the provision that the proponent be legally obligated to make good any negative impacts on groundwater bores. The federal government's conditional approval of the project placed a further 300 conditions on the proposal.

Earlier this month, after 18 months of comprehensive assessment, the Coordinator-General conditionally approved the Australia Pacific LNG project with 570 conditions. These conditions again included the stipulation that the proponent be legally obligated to make good any negative impacts on groundwater bores. The project is now undergoing further assessment under the Commonwealth government's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Each of these LNG projects have been put through rigorous environmental assessment processes involving government agencies at all levels, with opportunities for public comment on at least two occasions. The Coordinator-General has included close to 1,800 conditions and the Commonwealth a further 600 conditions so far. These conditions establish an environment of caution in proceeding with the projects, with the proponents providing information on a staged basis and with information being reviewed prior to the next stage of the project proceeding.

As an example, prior to environmental authorities undertaking construction in the gas fields, Santos must provide to the Coordinator-General and the Department of Environment Resource Management for review, among other things, a constraints planning and field development protocol, a coal seam gas water management plan and a brine management plan. Prior to the commencement of petroleum activities—and let me reiterate the word 'prior'—Santos must provide to the Coordinator-General and the Department of Environment Resource Management for review an operational plan for development of the gas fields. This

plan is initially to be for a limited period—three years has been suggested—with review, amendment and extension for a further short period on a rolling basis after that. This is genuinely precautionary.

It is this staged process of approval which will allow adjustments to be made which take into account experience gained in the previous stage and which will protect the environment associated with the development of a new industry for Queensland, an industry which will ensure future prosperity for all Queenslanders, particularly those in regional and rural Queensland. This is based upon science and learning as we go, as we heard from the member for Capalaba.

It has been recommended to me by a number of critics of the coal seam gas industry that I see the film *Gasland*. I note the trailer for this film points out that in 2005 a Republican led US Congress exempted gas companies from much existing environmental regulation, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act, the Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. This government and this House have not contemplated such a move and have supported the comprehensive assessment and regulation of this industry. Indeed, this parliament has acted to tighten regulation of this industry. I commend the amendment as a fair reflection of the sure precautionary position the government has taken towards the development of a sustainable CSG and LNG industry.