




Speech by

Dale Shuttleworth

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Hansard Thursday, 12 July 2012

ELECTRICITY (EARLY TERMINATION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SHUTTLEWORTH** (Ferny Grove—LNP) (4.16 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the House about the importance of the passage of the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill in a manner that will allow this Campbell Newman government to further facilitate the reduced cost-of-living promises to the people of Queensland and to the people of Ferny Grove. I again refer to the words of a former Premier, Mr Beattie, who said on 28 September 2005—

If people live in largely the south-east corner, the first choice they will have is that they can leave the current system with Energex and they can go out and become part of the brave new world of choice ...

Unfortunately, many retailers have introduced termination fees that negate any of the intended benefit this apparent competition may have delivered. We on this side of the House understand what market competition truly is. We understand that inhibitors to competition, such as termination and exit fees, create barriers to consumers that render the forces of market competition useless. Conversely, the predecessors of those opposite, without adequate knowledge of the true market competition, made further statements on 28 September 2005, saying—

One fact is certain: we have the fairest and strongest system in Australia and that will not change. This is a great day for Queensland electricity consumers. They will pay less.

As I have pointed out previously in the House, since June 2007 we have witnessed electricity increases totalling 50.08 per cent and CPI increases throughout that same period in Queensland of 23.9 per cent. This is not by any measure fair or competitive. In fact, it is enough to make you red with anger, so clearly I am not very happy!

To stem the tide of unrelenting increases in charges, this LNP government pledged to freeze tariff 11 increases, thereby delivering real cost-of-living reductions to consumers throughout Queensland. The intended benefits to Queenslanders as a result of the cost-saving measures forming part of the government's cost-of-living bill by freezing tariff 11 have been deliberately circumvented by a number of retailers, with little justification. To ensure that consumers are not hamstrung by overly onerous retailer contracts, this government, which has the wellbeing of all Queenslanders foremost in our decisions, has proposed through the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill a means that will facilitate the consumer to effectively seek out and engage alternative electricity retailers to ensure their families can best manage and reduce their cost of living through a selection of alternative suppliers.

On the same day that the actions of Origin Energy became apparent, I had a constituent sit in my office foyer and outline to me his disgust at Origin and the inaction of the previous government, which not only facilitated the skyrocketing costs of energy in this state but did absolutely nothing to ensure that the people on the ground—the working families of Queensland, the true Aussie battler in fact—would have their costs of living contained. He expressed annoyance at the previous member for Ferny Grove who in his time as minister for mines and energy oversaw the most significant electricity increases the state had endured and had done nothing about it.

He expressed a great deal of compassion for those less fortunate who on occasions have struggled to make a choice, which other members in the House have outlined today—such as reducing their meat

intake or isolating electricity throughout the evening—simply to make ends meet at the checkout lane when the total outstrips the amount available to spend. He said that on occasions he has paid for those items himself so that those people could go through life a little more comfortably. Finally, he expressed annoyance and disbelief that the Labor Party, which claimed to be the representative of working families of Queensland—the true Aussie battler—has become so removed and disengaged, so irrelevant and incapable of offering real alternatives.

In stark contrast, this LNP Newman government continues to deliver meaningful reforms that connect directly to the hip pocket of Queenslanders and deliver true cost-of-living reductions. I commend the bill to the House.