




Speech by

Freya Ostapovitch

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Thursday, 12 July 2012

ELECTRICITY (EARLY TERMINATION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs OSTAPOVITCH** (Stretton—LNP) (4.05 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill. I was a member of the Finance and Administration Committee which consulted with the director-general of the Department of Energy and Water Supply and his colleagues, the general manager of energy sector reform and the manager of consumer and retail policy. The objective of this bill is to prohibit energy retailers from penalising consumers with termination or exit fees should they choose to terminate their contracts early. In the case where small and residential customers are notified of an increase in charges during the course of their market contract and the increased charges exceed notified electricity prices, customers who are adversely affected by the increased charges will be able to terminate their market contracts without being penalised by early termination fees.

I would like to thank the chairman and his staff for an amazing job at very short notice. We did not have a lot of time for the reasons that other members have spoken about. At this point, I was going to thank the member for Mulgrave for his bipartisan approach but when I heard the member for Rockhampton say that they would be moving an amendment I was left feeling very disappointed. This amendment comes in response to the irresponsible action taken by some energy retailers to increase their electricity tariffs for customers who are on market contracts which exceed notified electricity tariffs.

This bill will have a significant impact on the budgets of the residents who live in the electorate of Stretton. We are committed to keeping electricity prices as low as possible and this bill contributes to our objective. In a previous speech, I told the story of some of my elderly constituents who were putting out their solar lights during the day and bringing them in at night so that they would not have to turn on their lights at night. They did this in order to save what I would consider to be a minuscule amount of money off their electricity bills. However, to them this was a significant way of saving money.

People are on budgets and people do need to have the compassion of their governments, and this government aims to keep the cost of living down. I commend the Premier and the Minister for Energy and Water Supply for taking this strong action in order to keep the LNP's election promise to keep the cost of living down. I commend this bill to the House.