



Speech by


**Michael Hart**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

Hansard Thursday, 12 July 2012

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## **ELECTRICITY (EARLY TERMINATION) AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr HART** (Burleigh—LNP) (11.29 am): I rise today to contribute in a small way to the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill's objective is to prohibit early termination or exit fees for small and residential customers where they are notified of an increase in charges during the course of their market contract and when increased charges exceed notified electricity prices. This bill has come about because of events over the last few weeks that have been well publicised—that is, the action taken by some energy retailers to increase their electricity tariffs for customers on market contracts considerably above the notified or regulated tariffs. This is simply un-Australian.

I cannot tell honourable members how many people have come into my electorate office over the last couple of years worried about their very survival. They are worried about the future of their children. They are worried about the possibility of their children ever being able to buy a house in the future. Over the last few years we have seen increases in just about everything. We have seen increases in the cost of fuel, the cost of car registration, the cost of water and, of course, the cost of electricity. I have to say that every time I receive a bill from my local electricity supplier I am scared to open it. My wife has got to the stage where she will not open our electricity bill because it is reaching the point that you just cannot jump over it.

Increases in the cost of living in this state can be directly linked to the incompetent former Labor government and the way it managed this state. Electricity retailers have gone against our commitment to lower the cost of living and have announced a huge increase in the cost of electricity to all Queenslanders. The penalty for terminating consumer market contracts is preventing many low-income earners, who cannot afford the fee, changing retailers. This bill will enable customers who have been adversely affected by the increased charges to exit and change suppliers without being penalised by early termination fees.

This amendment will not affect negotiated contracts which already contain charges and mechanisms, such as CPI increases, in the charges over the term of the contract. In addition, it would not apply to contracts that customers agree to that may contain higher charges overall but which are guaranteed to remain the same for the entire term of the contract, thereby providing price certainty to customers.

This government made a pre-election commitment to keep the cost of living under control, and this amendment gives electricity company customers the power to change their electricity supplier, to shop around and to get the best deal without any penalties. I congratulate the Minister for Energy and Water Supply on bringing this bill before the House in such a quick fashion. I commend the bill to the House.