




Speech by

Seath Holswich

MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

Hansard Thursday, 12 July 2012

ELECTRICITY (EARLY TERMINATION) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr HOLSWICH** (Pine Rivers—LNP) (4.31 pm): I rise to provide a short statement in support of the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill. It is a measure of this Newman government's determination to get on with the job that this legislation comes before the House today. It is also a measure of this government's commitment to cutting the cost of living for Queensland households and businesses that we see this bill in the House today. In the lead-up to this year's election the LNP made a commitment to Queenslanders; we made a commitment to keeping the costs of power down through better management of Queensland's electricity system and through this legislation, and other legislation that has already passed through this House, which is exactly what we are doing.

This is in stark contrast to the previous Labor government. Who can forget the infamous words of then Premier Bligh when she told Queenslanders that no-one would be worse off under a privatised electricity network. How is that working out for the people of Queensland now? In the final years of the Bligh government householders saw rises of up to \$700 in their electricity bills. Pine Rivers residents saw this for what it was: a broken commitment and yet more economic mismanagement that ended up seeing electricity companies putting their hands even deeper into the pockets of families, pensioners and businesses in my electorate.

The last few years have just been one hit after another for Pine Rivers residents. They have seen their public transport fares increase time after time without any increase in the services that they receive for those fares. They have seen their water costs continually increase. They have lost their petrol subsidy. They have seen stamp duty exemptions removed under the previous Labor government and they saw electricity costs continue to rise. Pine Rivers residents are sick of it and they are telling me that they are relieved to finally see a government that is serious about easing cost-of-living pressures through bills such as this.

The purpose of the Electricity (Early Termination) Amendment Bill is to ensure that electricity consumers have the option of changing providers if electricity providers unfairly gouge them with unjustifiable increases in electricity charges. It will achieve this by prohibiting early termination or exit fees for small businesses and residential customers if charges rise above notified prices. I am pleased to also see in this legislation a requirement that electricity retailers notify affected customers of any increases above the notified prices. I note that the 20-day notice period that is provided for is comparable to similar market contracts and I certainly applaud this measure. I am also pleased to see transitional provisions contained within the bill that allow customers who have been notified of price increases since 1 June 2012 that 20-day period to consider terminating their contract with their current provider.

This bill is about choice. It is about giving the hardworking mums and dads of Pine Rivers a choice when their electricity provider seeks to unfairly gouge them. It is about giving choice to small businesses in the Brendale industrial precinct to ensure their profit margins are not squeezed any further unnecessarily. It is about giving choice to residents in my electorate who are surviving on aged pensions or disability pensions who simply cannot afford to be paying any more on their electricity bills and certainly cannot afford to change providers. This bill is further evidence of the Newman government's commitment to delivering cost-of-living relief for Pine Rivers families and small businesses. We as a government

understand the pressures being faced by average Queensland families. We understand that no household can afford to see their bills continually going up and up. We understand that we as the government of Queensland need to stand up for families, stand up for small businesses and stand up for those who will suffer when electricity companies make unprecedented price rises like those that we have seen in recent weeks.

I seem to be saying this often in this House, but I am proud to be a part of a government that is delivering for Queensland electricity consumers and I will continue to support any legislation that will ease the cost-of-living burden on residents of the Pine Rivers electorate. I commend the bill to the House.