




Speech By  
**Deb Frecklington**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2014

**ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (4.52 pm): I rise to support the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. I would like to thank the Minister for Energy and Water Supply, the Hon. Mark McArdle, for bringing this sensible bill before the House. Once again, I am extremely proud to be standing here as a member of this government to support a bill which supports regional Queensland. Our government has a strong plan to put downward pressure on electricity prices and is currently implementing the largest ever reforms to the electricity sector in Queensland.

Today I would like to focus on the continuation of the Solar Bonus Scheme for regional Queenslanders and other eligible customers. In June 2012 our government made the extremely sensible decision, which was the only way forward, to close the 44c Solar Bonus Scheme to new customers. This scheme was contributing so strongly to the rise in electricity prices for every mum, dad, grandma, grandad, shop owner, community hall owner—everyone across Queensland. That and the carbon tax represented complete idiocy and ‘Labornomics’ from those who sit opposite.

Today we are helping to save up to \$110 million on Queenslanders’ power bills by scrapping this unaffordable Solar Bonus Scheme, lowering the cost of living for families. However, when we closed the 44c scheme we asked the QCA to investigate the future of solar feed-in tariffs once the transitional 8c Solar Bonus Scheme came to a close at 30 June this year. On considering their findings in December last year, it was agreed to mandate a retailer-funded feed-in tariff to be determined by the Queensland Competition Authority for small customers in the Ergon Energy network. This was based on the fact that in regional areas, such as my great electorate of Nanango, there is no competition in this retail energy market, that is, outside of that south-east corner. We cannot pick and choose who we can buy our energy from; Ergon is the only supplier available in this rural and regional market. While customers in South-East Queensland can still expect to receive payment for their exported electricity, customers in the region serviced by Ergon simply cannot. So I am very pleased that our government has chosen to acknowledge the lack of competition and will be establishing the requirement for Ergon Energy Retail to provide a solar feed-in tariff to our regional and rural areas for all of those Queenslanders, for those who are already part of the 8c Solar Bonus Scheme and for new solar households. As a regional member based in the beautiful seat of Nanango, I applaud this move. I understand the department advised the committee during the review process that it expects regional customers to receive around 8c per kilowatt hour. Additionally, this bill requires that the feed-in tariff will be paid by Ergon Retail, recognising that Ergon will benefit from the onselling of the exported electricity. This means the feed-in tariff will no longer flow through to all of our electricity bills, thereby saving Queenslanders some \$110 million over the next six years.

I know that this announcement is already welcomed in my home town of Kingaroy. We have had a very high uptake of solar technology in my electorate. As the member for Beaudesert was just saying, we have many farmers and irrigators around my area who do rely on solar. Also, we have several businesses based in Kingaroy that are very pleased with this government decision. That includes Evolution Solar. I would also like to talk about Greg and Kelly Taffe of Go Green Generation,

who have worked hard to build up an amazing business in Kingaroy. They have diversified throughout the South Burnett and really are going great guns. They have been very keen to know if a feed-in tariff would remain in the Ergon supply region. For them, this is great news. Greg Taffe came into my electorate office today. I have just got off the phone from my electorate officer Belinda, who said that Greg was very pleased with this news because it secures his business in the South Burnett. He is now able to continue to employ the staff he employs and will be able to work further to expand that amazing business. I would really like to encourage Greg in his business to ensure that he continues growing that business for this great area of Queensland.

There are thousands of regional Queensland families and businesses in the Ergon area who choose to install these solar panels. They will be pleased to know that they have not been forgotten and they have not been denied access to a scheme just because they live in regional Queensland. They will continue to receive a feed-in tariff which will reduce the burden of their electricity bills while at the same time they will know they are part of a more sustainable Solar Bonus Scheme. It is also pleasing to note that the Queensland Farmers Federation has put its support behind this bill. While I know many of our landholders and, in particular, our irrigators are struggling with the issue of high electricity costs, this bill is good news. It will continue to provide some relief while our government progresses with further electricity reforms.

I believe that this bill is an example of our government's strong plan for a brighter future, and I would very much like to congratulate and thank the minister, the Hon. Mark McArdle, for his hard work in this area. The electricity business is one of the most difficult and misunderstood that our state and our government has to grapple with. It is a credit to this minister that he appreciates what the regions are going through and that he is actually standing up and supporting those regions with this bill.

Whilst I appreciate that I have only addressed a third of the bill that the minister has put before the House, it is important for my electorate of Nanango and the businesses that will now be able to continue to grow and employ people in my region, including those irrigators that I touched on. I am very proud to fully support this bill