




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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MOTION

Electricity Prices, Order for the Production of Documents

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.21 pm): What a fearsome contribution that was from the member for Kallangur, trying to tell us that his knowledge of the ETU somehow tells that he knows about electricity, telling us that we might learn something when he continued with the same baseless claims that we heard from the Treasurer—in fact, parroting the Treasurer's claims that we need to wait for MYFER.

This was a very clear election commitment. It has been outlined by the member for Glass House and by the member for Burnett what Labor said before the election and what they have actually delivered since—that is, delay after delay after delay. We have heard from the Treasurer tonight that now we have to wait till December for this \$150 million worth of savings that might come from people in human resources or that might come from people in IT—'It could be entity A or entity B, but we do not want to frighten anyone because we are really not sure whether it will happen at all.' That is very different to what people in Queensland were led to believe before 31 January. There was a cast iron promise to make sure these five entities were merged into two, yet supposedly the member for Kallangur is able to tell us that he knows more than the ACCC, that he knows more than the Productivity Commission, that somehow he knows more about any advice given to the competition authority—a newbie in this place with a vested interest.

I rise tonight to support the motion moved by the member for Glass House and oppose the amendments moved by the Treasurer. We have had price rises over the last three years, but those increases started much earlier than three years ago. Network prices were locked in in 2010. In fact, it was the gold-plating of the networks experienced under the then premier Peter Beattie that helped lead to the energy wipe-outs that I and the member for Caloundra, the member for Currumbin and others who came in the 2004 election saw. Those energy wipe-outs caused John Mickel to be made the energy minister. It was John Mickel this week or last week who called on Labor to not decrease competition and in fact had to be slapped down, as we heard from the member for Glass House, by the former member for Rockhampton in that typical belligerent Labor way that we see from those opposite tonight. That was John Mickel standing up for the consumers of Queensland. But over on the other side we see Labor politicians standing up for their own jobs and those of their mates.

If the Treasurer is absolutely fair dinkum about saving \$150 million a year from these supposed mergers, the bottom line is \$150 million a year equates to 1,500 jobs. That is what they are worth—about \$100,000 each. Yet we have the Treasurer who is not prepared to come in here and tell us where exactly those people are supposed to come from, just as he could not do at estimates. Yet in their pre-election manifesto, it was all supposedly to be done by the budget that we had brought down just a couple of months ago.

The bottom line is that Labor are addicted to the revenues that these businesses provide. They gouge them for profits to prop up their budget. They rip special dividends out of them and they are still doing it. Back in 2009, when I was in this place, the then treasurer Andrew Fraser wrote to the Labor federal energy minister arguing the case for higher power prices. We have seen from the energy minister, who is to speak after me, that he has not opposed the process of making the appeal that we are about to see brought down by the regulator tomorrow.

At estimates, when the director-general of the Department of Energy and Water Supply was asked about what would happen if there were revisions to the AER determinations, Professor Simshauser said, 'But if there is a revision and it deviates from the current draft then there will be a change in the structure of electricity prices.' The member for Glass House then asked, 'And that change will mean an increase? Professor Simshauser said, 'Depending on where the revenues go. It will follow the determination.' The member for Glass House said, 'So if the revenues go down, prices go down. If the revenues go up, prices go up.' Professor Simshauser said, 'An increase in revenue would mean an increase ...' Who benefits from the increase? The Palaszczuk government—a government whose sole budget strategy is to strip as much money out of these businesses as possible.

They went to the election on a platform of paying down debt using the revenues of these businesses. Now we are seeing a sleight of hand that we saw in the budget where the total budget in Queensland is not decreasing, but they are trying to say that by stripping money out of the energy companies they can afford to have more debt and yet Queenslanders are not going to pay. We know what is going to happen under this Labor government. We are talking about another policy failure—this failure to plan to aggregate the state owned electricity companies.

The Treasurer went to the election ignoring all expert advice in this space. There were competition issues that it would lead to higher power prices and their modelling completely ignored the up-front costs of merging businesses. That is why we do not need to wait till December. That is why this motion calls on the government to provide that modelling by early November. That is appropriate for us to be able to judge what is going to happen so Queenslanders can hopefully not suffer under this Labor government as they have before.

(Time expired)