




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KALLANGUR

Record of Proceedings, 28 October 2015

MOTION

Electricity Prices, Order for the Production of Documents

 **Mr KING** (Kallangur—ALP) (6.16 pm): As I have worked in the Queensland electricity supply industry for most of my adult life, I think I am pretty well placed to be able to contribute to this debate. It is sickening to me to read the wording of the opposition's motion after what they wanted to do to my industry. They are calling for advanced details of the electricity merger proposal. They are wanting to insert themselves into cabinet processes to get an early drop on something the government has already said will be released in December this year.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock! Member for Nanango, those comments are unparliamentary. I ask you to withdraw.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I withdraw.

Mr KING: This is despite those opposite, when in government, spending more than \$70 million preparing the same government owned corporations for sale without having a mandate to do so. This money could have been spent on schools, hospitals, roads and unemployment programs. The money those opposite wasted could have paid for a number of railway stations, like the one I need at Dakabin. It is money wasted. I therefore support the amendment moved by the Treasurer.

We all saw the Strong Choices ads and propaganda before the election, which the LNP is now trying to wipe from the collective memory of Queenslanders. I do not forget. Those opposite were so keen on outsourcing assets that they even outsourced the assessment and market soundings they undertook.

Let us be clear, if privatisation had occurred it would have resulted in no dividends being retained by the government for investment in essential services like schools, hospitals and roads. Instead, all dividends would have been given up to private sector owners to profit from. These private owners would have increased prices and cut jobs in order to satisfy their need for a return on investment.

It is hypocritical for the LNP to be raising anything to do with the energy GOCs—hypocritical at best. It is particularly so given we have requested the opposition release documents relating to the preparatory work done on asset sales when they were last in government, which the Leader of the Opposition so far has not done. What double standards. We gave a commitment to Queenslanders that we would responsibly reduce debt without selling our income-generating assets.

As one of the most decentralised states in Australia, it is crucial our energy generators, transmitters and distributors remain in state ownership to ensure appropriate levels of service, reliability and industry experience to maintain.

Mr Crandon: So you can gouge them.

Mr KING: You have no idea. With these businesses remaining in public ownership, we have an obligation to ensure that they are run as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Mr Crandon: What do you know about electricity anyway?

Mr KING: I might have a clue about electricity—a little bit. Simply selling the businesses off to the highest bidder was the easy option the former government were pursuing—an easy option that would have left Queenslanders worse off. Power prices are forecast to stabilise over the coming years and the decisions taken in the budget to reduce debt through equity withdrawals from Ergon and Energex have no impact on the price of electricity. Oh, no love? Changes in technology mean the electricity network businesses—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr KING: You might learn something if you listen. Changes in technology mean that the electricity network businesses are going through a period of change, where the network no longer needs to be expanded or enhanced at the same rate as before, when the businesses were making up for previous years of underinvestment and improving reliability.

As the government has indicated, the Treasurer will be updating the House at the time of the Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Review in December on the status of the electricity mergers. There is no hidden agenda. There is no Strong Choices propaganda campaign in the works. This is how structural reform is done by a responsible and measured government. We went to the election open and up-front with a clear plan. Now we are implementing that plan in consultation with the GOCs, the unions and the broader public. Government will provide, as I have said, an update on the electricity mergers process in the Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Review in December, and I would urge those in opposition to pay attention when it comes out—unlike you are at the moment. You just might learn a thing or two.

Mr Crandon interjected.

Mr KING: Are you finished? You might learn a thing or two. Did you hear me? I support the amendments moved by the Treasurer.