




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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### **ENERGY AND WATER OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (5.08 pm): I rise to make a very brief contribution in favour of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2015. This bill is a good example of the sort of practical support that small business and community sectors can expect from the Palaszczuk Labor government. I commend the minister for his efforts. We can all identify with the challenge of resolving a dispute with an electricity retailer. For better or for worse, it is a complex area and when faced with possible questions or issues with your electricity contract it is tempting to stick it in the bottom drawer—the too-hard basket. Energy contracts and tariffs can be difficult to understand and navigating through the process and, for that matter, trying to contact retailers to inquire or resolve a dispute can be time-consuming, stressful and detracts from the running of your business.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman's dispute resolution service is a great service for consumers and small businesses who do not necessarily have the knowledge, skills, resources or time to work through issues with energy retailers. It is independent, free and fair. This bill makes that same service available to small businesses with high energy needs. It helps level the playing field, not only by providing access to the dispute resolution service that helps consumers negotiate on an equal footing with their electricity retailer but also by providing the same access to small businesses that consume high amounts of electricity as other small businesses with less electricity consumption. An additional 5,100 businesses are expected to be able to take advantage of the service as a result of this bill. By providing high energy-using small business customers, including not-for-profit organisations, with access to a free and independent energy-specific dispute resolution service we are giving these organisations more freedom to do what they do best: provide valuable goods and services to their customers and support for community groups and activities. We all know that when our small business sector is strong that means more jobs and opportunities for Queenslanders. I am proud to support a bill that supports small business and I commend the bill to the House.