




Speech By  
**Andrew Powell**

**MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE**

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Record of Proceedings, 20 April 2016

**CRIME AND CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise to oppose the amendment moved by the Treasurer and instead support the original motion moved by the member for Clayfield. Most importantly, I rise to support the mum-and-dad electrical contractors of this state and to support the Master Electricians organisation and the work that it is doing to try to defeat this harebrained scheme of the Palaszczuk Labor government.

It is probably best to explain why this is important by referring to what Malcolm Richards himself has said today. I will tell the House what a monolithic government run organisation, a merge of Energex and Ergon, would do in competition with mum-and-dad small businesses around this state. For starters, that organisation would have a brand power that any small business in this state would die for. The minute the Ergon brand is rolled out across regional Queensland, people will jump at it rather than using Wondai Electrical Services. That is completely and utterly unfair.

Secondly, whilst the small business owner is literally living on 30 to 60 days worth of credit, this business would be backed by a limitless supply of taxpayer dollars, particularly as it will be run by the Palaszczuk Labor government, which is propped up by the ETU and its other union mates. Any time that monolithic organisation would require more money, it would go cap in hand to the Treasurer, saying, 'Please, sir, can I have some more?,' and they would get it. Small businesses would not get that kind of assistance.

Thirdly, and possibly most concerning, is the very real conflict of interest that would arise. Currently, small business electrical contractors must go to the likes of Ergon and Energex to get approval to install solar panels and other emerging technologies. If that same approval rested with the monolithic organisation, can members guess what would happen? As the member for Mermaid Beach said, it will be Caesar judging Caesar. That is, it would be very easy for the organisation to refuse to approve an electrical contractor but keep the business itself.

I turn to the Treasurer's belated comments, as published in the *Australian* this morning. There is a bit of a pattern forming. Stories are printed with a quote that the Treasurer was unable to comment before the deadline, but then the next morning he does comment, having realised how big a mess he has created. This morning, the *Australian* quoted the Treasurer as stating—

As part of the merger of Ergon Energy and Energex, a new energy service business will be created to take advantage of opportunities of emerging technologies and the changing energy industry.

I can tell the House that it is not government businesses that are at the front of emerging technologies; it is gentlemen such as Mr Owen Blamires from Wondai Electrical Services, whom I met this morning. Such people have been driving emerging technologies throughout Queensland—not only in central and western Queensland; throughout Queensland—and not the government.

The Treasurer also stated—

The new energy services business will not target existing solar installers or electrical contractors in established markets. The business will look at offering services where there are limited resources or capacity available to customers, such as in remote areas of Queensland including indigenous communities.

There is no place within the state of Queensland where there are limited resources or capacity, because there are 1,200 existing contractors across the state, all of whom are willing to go wherever they must go to provide a service. A contractor who operates out of the Burnett services all of western Queensland out to the border. The Treasurer must not tell me that there are parts of this state that cannot be serviced by existing electrical contractors! He is setting up a business that will compete against mum-and-dad small business owners in this state.

Let us remember that it is not the government that provides the bulk of apprenticeships and traineeships across the state; it is mums and dads. Eighty-five per cent of apprentices and trainees are employed by businesses that are run by people such as those we met today and those that are members of the Master Electricians. The government must get serious about supporting small business. It must throw out this harebrained idea and back our electrical contractors across the state of Queensland.