




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr POWER** (Logan—ALP) (5.22 pm): I served on the Transportation and Utilities Committee that considered the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The bill set up the underlying legislation to facilitate the business-as-usual operations of Energex and Ergon following the merger of these two government service providers. Further, it broadens the remit of the Islanders industry boards, trading as IBIS stores, to enhance their governance and enlarge the area in which it is possible to operate.

With that introduction, one would think that these bills would be noncontentious and pass through this place with a diligent committee process and wide support. However, we see a negative opposition fixated on the past. They are fixated on asset sell-offs and cuts. It is disappointing. When they are a rabble led by 'Mr Strong Choices' himself, the member for Clayfield, it is not in the least surprising.

I note the members for Indooroopilly, Southport, Redlands, Whitsunday, Burleigh, Glass House, Nanango, Albert and Toowoomba North are all speaking today. They have something else in common other than just speaking to this legislation today: they all voted for Strong Choices and for asset sell-offs. Considerably fewer had in common their vote in the leadership ballot as only 14 voted for the member for Clayfield. The rest had to be stitched up in a deal.

They all strongly supported the Strong Choices Nicholls-Newman plan to sell off our assets. Today, they continue to support the sell-off of our electricity assets. I notice today that the member for Clayfield was going on about saying sorry, but we know he cannot say sorry for the plan to sell off Ergon and Energex. He cannot ever say he was wrong, because we know he will once again discover some reason for assets sales.

When I went to the election in 2015 I went with a clear commitment to keep income-producing assets in public hands. This bill is to merge two electricity entities into one corporate entity and to ensure the continuity of processes of supplying houses and industry with a stable supply of electricity. It is a simple instrument to ensure this. I commend it to the House.

I wish to outline for the benefit of the House that the Transportation and Utilities Committee advertised and called for submissions in the standard way. Indeed, we received submissions on the bill from several parties. The committee further advertised for public hearings and conducted a public hearing in this place on 20 April. The hearings were open to the public and broadcast in the standard way on the internet.

The member for Indooroopilly made irrelevant statements about electrical contractors. These scaremongering and irrelevant statements indicate that the member for Indooroopilly has failed to read the transcript of the public hearings. It should be noted that Mr Tonks, the Assistant Under Treasurer,

made it 100 per cent clear in evidence to the committee that what the member for Indooroopilly was complaining about had nothing to do with the bill. I quote him for the benefit of members opposite. He stated—

In light of recent media commentary, it is important to note that the future operating model for the planned energy services business is beyond the scope of this bill.

Members may note that I made comments about the relevance of many of the comments of those opposite. Those on our committee should know better. I repeat what I said again—

In light of recent media commentary—

this was the fearmongering of the opposition—

it is important to note that the future operating model of the planned services business is beyond the scope of this bill.

Many potential submitters who may have been interested in the future operating model would have known this. That is why I would say they chose not to make submissions. In evidence to the committee Ms Christensen stated—

We reviewed the Queensland statute book to identify references to Energex and Ergon and ensured that they continue, from a business point of view, operate and do their business the same way once they are changed. It is a cautious approach to make sure that we have a mechanism to ensure that, if something is missed ...

The member for Whitsunday asked questions about this. The chair made it clear that the energy services business was clearly stated by Mr Tonks to be beyond the scope of the bill that we were asking questions about. What did the member for Whitsunday say? He said, 'I accept that.' It was quite clear to all members of the committee, but especially clear to the member for Whitsunday. So one would question why he seeks to mislead the House into believing that this bill is all about mum-and-dad Rugby League players in Townsville.

We have made it absolutely clear that it is misleading. Further and more serious than the irrelevant rubbish that we heard earlier—

Mr WATTS: I rise to a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. Surely, if the member for Logan believes someone has misled the House he would be duty bound to put that in writing to you.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): I call the member for Logan.

Mr POWER: Further, the member for Indooroopilly made reference to alleged proceedings of the committee that were not in the committee report. While making no reference to whether they were part of committee deliberations, I state my intention to refer the member for Indooroopilly to the Speaker for a potential breach of standing order 211. It makes clear that proceedings of a committee that have not been authorised to be published remain strictly confidential. I know he breaches the standing orders by being irrelevant to the bill, but this further breach is disappointing. I look forward to his apology to the House as soon as possible for both these breaches.

Just as importantly, part 2 of the bill is to modernise the corporate structures of the IBIS stores. The committee heard this from several other speakers. We made references to note how we as a government have the balance of experts in retail and warehousing with local community and consumer representatives. I have noted that when we form these boards on this and other legislation we often use the language 'at least one' or 'at least two' members of a board. We need a form of language that states that 'at least one' should not necessarily mean just one, but instead form the basis to have a healthy community, or female, or Aboriginal, or, in this case, Torres Strait Islander or other people active on boards, especially when they have skills or perspectives to offer. I hope in the future that those who are constituting these boards refer to the debate in this place and know that the House did not seek to create a ceiling in making reference to the number of community and consumer representatives; instead, we are encouraging the board to have the requisite skills and also that valuable community input.

Despite the irrelevancy that we have heard from many of the speakers on the other side, I ask them to concentrate on the actual tenor of the bill. They should refer to the public hearings, because they were clear, open and transparent. They should support the bill because I think it adds to the benefit of this state.