




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2016

**ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (10.39 pm): I rise to speak to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. This bill facilitates the merger of Ergon and Energex. I truly believe that it is better to facilitate the merger of two government owned corporations than to sell them full stop. When the LNP was in power, it chose to sell off our energy assets. I would rather see the profits that our assets make go into our schools and our hospitals—go to the Queensland public—than go to multinational corporations. I believe that the intent of this bill is to return these government owned corporations to public ownership.

The Beattie government privatised the retail arm of our energy assets. In that privatisation, there was a perception that, because of competition, electricity retail prices would be reduced. Since that time, electricity prices have tripled. When the Beattie government sold off the electricity assets, it was supported by the Liberal National Party. Although the LNP supported it, the current opposition leader was upset, because the Beattie government was just selling the retail arm. The current opposition leader was hoping that the Beattie government would sell off the generators, the lines, the wires, the poles—everything. In this place there has been a lot of propaganda and a lot of finger-pointing.

In regard to the Master Electricians, I understand where they are coming from. I worked for Queensland Rail for 20 years. In that time there were bridge gangs, concrete gangs, flying gangs, welders, forklift operators and plant operators. We were concerned that contractors and hire companies from New South Wales would come in and take our jobs. As they were taking our jobs, we were seeing towns close down, communities close down. Yes, there is an element of understanding. However, it works both ways.

Tonight, we are debating the merger of assets. When Queensland Rail was divided into a freight service, a passenger service and a coal and minerals service, all of a sudden we saw the word 'corporatisation'. After 'corporatisation' there was 'privatisation'. That privatisation saw the selling by the Bligh government of the coal component of Queensland Rail, which was earning \$1.7 billion each year. We saw the privatisation of the above rail section from Townsville to Mount Isa. As the Bligh government sold off these assets, the LNP was condemning it and campaigning against it. The ETU has been mentioned a number of times in this debate. When the Bligh government sold off these profitable assets, there was a massive campaign by the ETU against the Bligh government, led by Peter Simpson and Stewie Traill. Stewie Traill is probably one of the biggest socialists I have every met in my entire life, but I have to say that he is consistent. When Queenslanders got rid of the Bligh government, the Newman government came into power and gave the perception that it was going to be public servant friendly and that it would never sell our profitable assets. In the end, that government sacked 14,000 employees, declared war on everybody, and then said, 'We're going to sell all of our profitable assets.' The ETU then campaigned against the LNP government. This bill is not about the ETU, union mates and all of that, because I was there when the ETU campaigned against the Labor Party.

I think that the merging of these assets is about bringing them back into public ownership. I commend the Labor Party for introducing this bill. Yes, there are concerns in regard to the Master Electricians, but, as I said, when I worked for Queensland Rail there were concerns about local jobs being lost. This bill provides an opportunity. I believe that there is an opportunity for everyone in regard to the expansion of solar energy throughout rural and regional Queensland. The KAP has been pushing very hard for these opportunities to assist people in rural and regional Queensland to get access to solar power.

Privatisation is a bad thing. I do not support it. In this bill I see something that has potential and merit, and that is the merger of two government owned corporations. For a long time, people in rural and regional Queensland have been done over. The opposition leader saw the number of seats on his side reduce from 87 to 42, yet he is walking around saying that he is right. I see this bill as providing an opportunity. We have been calling for decentralisation. The LNP talks about decentralisation. This is an opportunity to bring the main headquarters to Townsville, which will benefit my region. That will not only create jobs but also create efficiencies, stop privatisation and bring these corporations back into public ownership. I support this bill. I commend the bill to the House.