




Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

Record of Proceedings, 16 February 2017

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Tully Coast Guard

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (2.30 pm): This week I tabled a petition on behalf of 1,110 petitioners about the outrageous situation facing the Tully Coast Guard regarding its radio installation which is co-located with Ergon infrastructure on Mount Mackay east of Tully. On 20 December 2016 I wrote to the energy minister expressing my anger and disgust at what appears to be Ergon trying to take advantage of a community based volunteer, not-for-profit organisation which provides an important marine safety service to the local community. As of today I have not had a reply from the minister or the CEO of Energy Queensland who received a copy of those representations.

Since 2001 there has been a gentleman's agreement with Ergon whereby this installation on Mount Mackay has enhanced the safety of boaties in the Cassowary Coast region. It provides coverage for the VHF distress and calling frequency, or channel 16, and UHF connections to a VHF repeater, channel 80, with a coverage of 80 nautical miles. In 2013 Ergon contacted the Tully Coast Guard to advise its infrastructure on Mount Mackay needed to be upgraded and asking if they would be prepared to contribute. You can imagine their shock when in June 2015 they were asked for between \$75,000 and \$150,000 to transfer their equipment, on top of a capital contribution of \$225,000, in addition to an ongoing annual rent of approximately \$25,000. Obviously these extraordinary costs would certainly have bankrupted the Tully Coast Guard. What I find particularly galling is that Ergon sought to extract this amount of money from a community based volunteer, not-for-profit organisation when no less than five Queensland government agencies also have communications infrastructure located at this site, including the Queensland police, Queensland ambulance, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the SES and Maritime Safety Queensland, not to mention Ergon Energy itself, a government owned corporation.

In September 2016 further correspondence was received by the Tully Coast Guard advising that none of these parties were prepared to contribute, instead Ergon proposed a temporary refurbishment to delay the upgrade for three years. Ergon then proposed an up-front charge of \$10,000 and an annual licence fee of more than \$10,000 for three years to maintain its small radio installation at the Mount Mackay site, which is well beyond their capacity to pay.

The Tully Coast Guard provides a vital community service to the Cassowary Coast region. Ergon is threatening the future of that service. I table a copy of my representations to the energy minister in which I request his intervention and direction to Ergon to withdraw its requirement for the Tully Coast Guard to pay to co-locate its radio installation on top of Mount Mackay.

Tabled paper: Letter, dated 20 December 2016, from the member for Hinchinbrook, Mr Andrew Cripps MP, to the Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy, Biofuels and Water Supply, Hon. Mark Bailey, regarding arrangements for the provision of VHS radio services between Ergon Energy and the Tully Flotilla of the Australian Volunteer Coastguard [\[206\]](#).