



Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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ADJOURNMENT

Tully Coastguard

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (10.47 pm): In February this year, I tabled a petition in this House regarding the Tully Coastguard's radio installation, which is co-located with Ergon infrastructure on Mount Mackay, east of Tully. In December 2016 I wrote to the energy minister about Ergon trying to charge a community-based volunteer not-for-profit organisation more than \$40,000 to keep its radio installation on that site for three years as part of an infrastructure upgrade. We have since received a response from the energy minister advising that the first \$10,000 contribution demanded by Ergon will be covered by a Queensland government department to allow negotiations to continue. Therefore, we have no resolution on the matter, just a temporary reprieve. I would have thought that the energy minister would have sorted this out to protect the Tully Coastguard from this greedy cash grab proposed by Ergon.

The other issue that the Tully Coastguard and boaties across the Cassowary Coast region have faced since December last year is that channel 16, the emergency channel, and channel 80, the public channel, have not been operational. This has caused a huge problem for the Tully Coastguard and the boating public. Marine safety has been compromised during the nearly five months those services have not been available. Since channels 16 and 80 stopped working on 17 December 2016, the Tully Coastguard has been unable to secure a contractor to visit the site to determine why they were not operational. We know Ergon was working at the Mount Mackay site on 17 December 2016 and that other Queensland government agencies that have radio infrastructure at the site also had problems with their radio communications at that time. On Saturday 29 April 2017, a contractor was able to get to the Mount Mackay site to investigate why channels 16 and 80 were not operational. The advice to the Tully Coastguard was that the power supply—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Hinchinbrook, I will ask the Clerk to pause the clock. Members will resume their seats. There are too many members standing around in the aisles talking and it is very difficult to hear the member.

Mr CRIPPS: The advice to the Tully Coastguard was that the power supply to its radio installation had been cut off by Ergon. This is an extraordinary and unacceptable action by Ergon that, as I mentioned earlier, has created marine safety issues for the general public across that region. The Tully Coastguard secured the agreement of Marine Safety Queensland, which has radio equipment at the Mount Mackay site, to access a temporary power supply from their installation. This provided enough power to re-establish channel 16, the emergency service used by the coastguard, but sadly it was not possible to restore channel 80, the channel used by the general public, so this problem remains live and serious.

The difference between life and death at sea can be access to effective and reliable communications to other vessels or to relevant emergency services. For that lifeline to have been cut off by Ergon is a dangerous act of gross negligence. The energy minister needs to smarten Ergon up and direct it to lay off the volunteers at the Tully Coastguard. It is absurd and insulting for Ergon to charge the Tully Coastguard fees to co-locate its radio infrastructure on top of Mount Mackay.

(Time expired)