




Speech By
Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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ADJOURNMENT

Ergon Energy, Mackays Bananas

 **Mr CRIPPS** (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (10.21 pm): As the shocking repercussions of the former Beattie and Bligh government's irresponsible power policies continue to savage Queensland's domestic and commercial electricity consumers, it is a disgrace to see these flawed policies, such as massive public subsidies for renewable energy projects and GOC dividend stripping, continued by the Palaszczuk government. As the consequences of Labor's failed electricity policies manifest themselves in higher power prices, the Palaszczuk government has desperately pursued a number of bandaid measures, using taxpayers' money, to try to minimise the political fallout from its addiction to energy GOC dividends and the catastrophic costs associated with the Solar Bonus Scheme.

The regional business customer support package was supposedly established to assist regional businesses, including farm businesses, on 'transitional and obsolete' tariffs to understand their electricity use, minimise their electricity costs and make informed choices about future tariff options. The Palaszczuk Labor government has stated that the regional business customer support package is part of its response to the Queensland Productivity Commission electricity pricing inquiry, which recommended that targeted assistance be provided to regional businesses to help them transition to standard cost-reflective tariffs.

Mackays Bananas, based in Tully, are Australia's largest producer of bananas and are a third-generation, family owned and diversified agribusiness in Queensland. Mackays Bananas directly employ several hundred Queenslanders. Over the last three months, Ergon has repeatedly contacted Mackays Bananas about participating in the agricultural tariff trial as part of the regional business customer support package. In good faith, Mackays Bananas engaged in numerous conversations with Ergon representatives leading up to the 2 May 2017 deadline to register for participation in the trial.

Mackays Bananas went through the very involved and costly internal process to nominate the appropriate electricity accounts to be involved in the tariff 33 and tariff 24 trials. Bizarrely, after successfully registering, Mackays Bananas were advised by Ergon that they were ineligible to participate in the trial because they were classified as a large business. To put it diplomatically, Mackays Bananas are absolutely filthy about this situation, given that Ergon actively pursued them to participate in this trial only to be told later that they were not eligible. In my view, Ergon owes Mackays Bananas an apology for its unprofessionalism.

This family owned farming business has been treated very poorly indeed. In view of the fact that the regional business customer support package is a Palaszczuk government initiative, I call on the energy minister to intervene immediately and rectify this embarrassing situation. If the energy minister will not do anything, the Minister for Agriculture should stand up for this Queensland farm business.

(Time expired)