




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 24 October 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Affordable Energy Plan

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (10.50 am):
The Palaszczuk government's retention of our publicly owned electricity assets means that Queensland is leading the nation by putting downwards pressure on energy prices and delivering energy affordability for the people of Queensland. In contrast to an asset sales agenda that would have delivered skyrocketing electricity prices, we will ensure that Queenslanders' power bills are capped to inflation over the next two years.

The Palaszczuk government's Affordable Energy Plan pays special attention to regional customers. Today I am pleased to outline that Ergon Retail will now be able to offer regional customers a choice of retail products. Those products will mean real savings to householders and small business. As a first step, Ergon Retail has developed the EasyPay Rewards package for residential and small business customers. Under the package customers will receive an up-front rebate off their bills in exchange for agreeing to direct debit and monthly e-billing. The rebate will be \$75 each year for householders and \$120 a year for small business.

The package offers real savings to regional householders and small business and comes on top of the other savings already announced in the Affordable Energy Plan. It is expected that up to 200,000 regional households could take up this offer. To make sure that as many regional customers take advantage of this energy savings reward package as possible, the government, along with Ergon Retail, will be providing information on how the package can be accessed.

The government recognises the desire of regional customers to have more choice of electricity retailers. To give them more choice, the Palaszczuk government is also removing what is known as the non-reversion policy that currently exists for households and small business that are Ergon's customers. That policy prevented regional customers from ever returning to Ergon Retail if they left to sign up with another retailer. The issue has been raised with me on many occasions. I can remember a business owner from Babinda in my electorate who purchased a business only to inherit an unfavourable market contract with a non-Ergon energy provider.

In short, removing the non-reversion policy will give regional customers more choice. It will give them more control over their energy bills. That is good news for the energy affordability of customers in regional Queensland. By removing the non-reversion policy not only will small customers who previously left Ergon Retail be able to return but also smaller customers who would like to try a private retailer can do so with the confidence that they can return one day. It will also free up customers who have previously left Ergon Retail, as now they will be able to take advantage of the EasyPay Rewards package.

This government is committed to looking after the interests of Queenslanders who are living and working in regional Queensland. What the government has announced today represents real savings for householders and small businesses in regional Queensland, as well as giving them real choice in who they choose as their electricity retailer. Our Affordable Energy Plan also includes \$50 a year off every household bill over the next two years, which is another example of our commitment to delivering initiatives that drive real savings on energy for real people.