




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

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MOTION: ENERGY COMPANIES, EXECUTIVE BONUSES

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (6.12 pm): I am looking forward to hearing the contribution of the member for Nanango, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, because electricity prices is one of the biggest issues that we face in regional Queensland. Right now, regional Queensland is being hugely affected by electricity prices. Labor's latest thought bubble on the electricity crisis in Queensland shows how out of touch this government really is. While the Palaszczuk Labor government refuses to budge on its unrealistic 50 per cent renewable energy target, Queenslanders are being asked to switch their air conditioners to 26 degrees during the peak summer months. I have never heard anything more ridiculous. Have the members opposite ever been out to Stonehenge, Jundah, or Boulia in the middle of summer?

Miss Barton: They think Stonehenge is in England.

Mr MILLAR: I take that interjection. They probably do. During summer, regional towns such as Stonehenge, Jundah, Jericho, Emerald and Clermont can experience temperatures of up to 44 and 45 degrees. Those temperatures are consistent over January and February. It is so hot that it is unbearable. We are going through probably one of the hottest periods in a long time, yet the Labor Party refuses to budge on its unrealistic 50 per cent renewable energy targets and says, 'Queenslanders, we have a solution. How about you switch your air conditioners to 26 degrees during the summer months.' That is fantastic!

Miss Barton: On the hottest day.

Mr MILLAR: On the hottest day. Today, I noticed in the paper an article stating that the temperature in the ministers' offices was set at 23 degrees, but the government is saying to Queenslanders, 'No, we need to turn your air conditioners up to 26 degrees.' We live in one of the hottest states in Australia, yet this government is asking people to turn up the temperature on their air conditioners. Perhaps the Premier, the ministers and the member for Gladstone should try sitting out at Longreach for a week when there are 45-degree days with an air conditioner set at 26 degrees. It is an absolute joke.

The Palaszczuk government has ruled out a new high-efficiency, low-emissions coal-fired power station for North Queensland and it is threatening to ration Queensland's energy use. We need a reliable, accessible energy source with baseload power, not a government that continues to push electricity prices through the roof and secretly imposes energy taxes.

Who could forget the Treasurer's great plan of taking the dividends from both Ergon and Energex—billions of dollars—which gives them no room to help people cope with electricity prices in regional Queensland? Who could forget—and we could not forget this—the deal the government did with a Western Australian company to give a huge discount to South-East Queenslanders while people in the bush continue to pay high electricity prices? I will never forget Roly, who operates the Commercial Hotel in Longreach, telling me that his electricity bill for the quarter was \$19,000. He cannot afford to pay that. That is a lot of pots of beer for him to sell.

Mrs Frecklington: It will be hot beer anyway.

Mr MILLAR: It probably will be hot beer—and off prawns over Christmas. Regional Queenslanders deserve better than that. On top of that, the Minister for Energy, Mark Bailey, attacks the agricultural sector. We see articles such as this one with the headline, 'Why farmers are to blame for high electricity bills'.

Mr BAILEY: I rise to a point of order. I find the member's comments about me personally offensive and inaccurate and I ask that—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Members. I am trying to hear the point of order. You have asked for it to be withdrawn?

Mr BAILEY: The member is misrepresenting my words. I find it personally—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: I can stay here all night if they like.

Mr SPEAKER: Just for clarification, do you find the matter offensive and ask that it be withdrawn?

Mr BAILEY: I find the matter personally offensive. The member is verballing me and I ask that it be withdrawn

Mr MILLAR: I withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: Is that a prop or is that to be tabled?

Mr MILLAR: That is to be tabled. I will table it.

Tabled paper. Document titled 'Why farmers are to blame for high electricity prices' [\[2004\]](#).

This is why farmers and graziers across Queensland are sick and tired of this Labor government. They are sick and tired of being demonised. They are sick and tired of being taken advantage of. The agricultural sector is one of the most profitable sectors in the Queensland economy. The number of jobs it creates in Queensland is amazing. When it comes to Queensland's economy, the agricultural sector is an unsung economic hero. We had a mining downturn, but what was there? Agriculture. Agriculture is a profitable business, but it is not profitable when we continue to see skyrocketing electricity prices.

People in the regions also need more investment in electricity infrastructure. If the electricity infrastructure fails they go without power not for two hours, not for 12 hours, but for 24 or 48 hours. That is unfair. The people in the regions are being treated wrongly. I call on the Labor government to start fixing this problem.