




Speech By
Jessica Pugh

MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 20 September 2018

ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION (BATTERIES AND PREMIUM FEED-IN TARIFF) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms PUGH** (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.14 pm): I am pleased to rise today to add my support to the Electricity and Other Legislation (Batteries and Premium Feed-in Tariff) Amendment Bill as a member of the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee. These amendments make a number of changes in relation to the non-reversion policy in regional Queensland, the Solar Bonus Scheme and embedded networks. Ten years after the introduction of solar power incentives by the then Labor government, who could have imagined just how successful the uptake of renewable energy would be? It is wonderful to see that Queenslanders have embraced renewable energy with such enthusiasm and it is for this reason we are making these amendments today.

As I drive through the electorate of Mount Ommaney it is clear to me that solar is here to stay. We in the Palaszczuk government know that renewable energy is only growing in popularity and continues to grow, thanks to the innovative local businesses such as Super Quick Electric in my electorate of Mount Ommaney. Rob and his team are helping Mount Ommaney locals crush their power bills down to almost zero by installing solar and battery technology in their homes, allowing them to save the planet and their hard-earned money at the same time. I am also thrilled by the government's solar loans, which will allow families who cannot afford the up-front cost of renewable energy to get on board. I know that already in Mount Ommaney many local families have taken this up, and that is fantastic to see.

We on this side of the House know that renewable energy is critical to customers seeing savings on their power bills. By installing solar or other renewables, people have the ability to cut their power bills right down, sometimes to zero. However, the legislation as it stands allows people to install systems larger than their household needs in order to create additional energy to sell back to the grid. As the minister has outlined previously, oversizing occurs when the overall size of the panels exceeds the size of the solar inverter approved for use under the scheme. Due to advances in technology, oversizing has become more prevalent and has the potential to increase scheme costs beyond what was anticipated when the scheme was designed over 10 years ago. That means the government would have to pay householders for their additional energy output.

When I spoke with Rob from Super Quick Electric in my electorate he was able to reasonably predict for me what size storage facility I would need to meet my personal household requirements and showed me a power bill based on this recommendation. We know that in the market these great local operators can assist consumers with selecting the right products that best meet their needs. Knowing that customers are able to seek accurate advice from their renewable energy product suppliers, it is important that we ensure taxpayers are not footing the bill for oversized systems. This is not in keeping with the spirit or the intention of the original legislation. This legislation will close that loophole and

ensure that we continue to provide the maximum bang for buck for Queensland taxpayers while still allowing taxpayers to crush their power bills. The legislation will place beyond doubt what is acceptable for households to install in order to meet their electricity needs.

Members of the House will be well aware of the Palaszczuk government's commitment to having 50 per cent renewable energy in the state of Queensland by 2030. It is vital to facilitate that for all Queenslanders, not just those in the south-east corner, so everyone has easy access to solar and the other expanding markets of renewable energy that we are now seeing. This is why a key component of the bill is removing the restriction on residential and small business customers in regional Queensland. This restriction is commonly referred to as the non-reversion policy and was introduced 10 years ago. Non-reversion as a policy was very successful in encouraging competition for large customers in regional Queensland; nearly 50 per cent of the customers on the east coast switched from Ergon Retail. However, smaller regional customers did not see the same benefits, with only one per cent going to market contracts.

As a result, the Palaszczuk government has reconsidered the efficacy of this policy for small customers and listened to the concerns raised in regional communities. It is with this in mind that we are removing the restriction in the interests of competition for the entire state of Queensland. The renewable energy sector in the state of Queensland—

Mr Hart: You don't understand your own policies.

Ms PUGH: The interjections from the member for Burleigh are not being taken. The renewable energy sector in the state of Queensland has gone from strength to strength. We have more solar on rooftops than any other state in Australia. We continue to lead the nation year on year in continuing to add solar to rooftops and renewables to households in Queensland. I am proud to be a part of the government leading the charge on renewables for all Queenslanders. I commend this bill to the House.