




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

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (12.28 pm): I rise today to make a brief contribution to the debate of the Electricity and Other Legislation (Batteries and Premium Feed-in Tariff) Amendment Bill 2018. As has been stated before, this bill was introduced in the 55th Parliament and reported on by the committee I chaired then, the Public Works and Utilities Committee; however, as the bill lapsed with the conclusion of the parliament, here we are today.

This bill will help to address a few issues with our current framework. It will: clarify when additional generation systems and electricity storage devices can be deployed in association with the Solar Bonus Scheme; enable the effective implementation of a new national regulatory framework for retail competition in embedded networks; and allow residential and small business customers in regional Queensland to have the option to return to Ergon Retail if they are based at a property that has switched to a private retailer. I note that, as with the previous bill, the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee made only one recommendation, and that is that the bill be passed.

When the Solar Bonus Scheme was introduced in 2008, I do not think anyone predicted the massive uptake—of around 280,000 customers to date—or the emerging technologies that have appeared since. The Palaszczuk government is committed to retaining the scheme for customers who continue to meet the eligibility requirements as well as enabling the installation of more solar PV and other emerging and new technologies such as batteries. All of these innovations, and the rapidly growing availability of them, present an exciting opportunity for customers to have more control over their energy use. Some customers on the current scheme are confused, however, about whether they can include or use these technologies without risking their eligibility to remain on the scheme. This bill will provide customers with the certainty they need about just what they can do while retaining their feed-in tariff.

Replacing panels in an array with like for like or even greater capacity panels is not an issue unless the whole array when modified has a significantly greater generation capacity. Likewise, batteries are fine to be included in a system as long as they are not used as additional generation above what the system was designed to supply. The practice of oversizing by playing with an inverter to allow it to provide greater capacity is therefore increasing generation and is not permitted.

These amendments will clarify and allow new technologies to be integrated to align with the original intent of the Solar Bonus Scheme, which was that generation would be used in a customer's residence or business and that excess beyond normal use could be exported to help overall generation to the network and they would be compensated for that.

Mr Hart: Hear, hear! Someone who understands.

Mr KING: I note the interjection from the member for Burleigh, who has recently completed a study trip on feed-in tariffs overseas. It seems like he did not learn much, but I hope he enjoyed it.

I will now make a few remarks on the regulatory arrangements for competition in embedded networks. Embedded networks are private systems such as caravan parks, apartment blocks and industrial parks with a single network connection point. In December 2017 the National Electricity Rules changed to remove barriers to retail competition for customers in embedded networks. These amendments simply allow us to comply with this and give customers a choice to access the competitive market if they wish.

Finally, the non-reversion policy introduced 10 years ago has made any customers outside the south-east who choose to switch to a retailer other than Ergon only able to go one way and not return to Ergon. Very few residential and small business customers have switched to private retailers. These amendments will give small customers affected by this policy the option of returning to Ergon Retail and give surety to small customers thinking about making the switch from Ergon Retail that they can choose to return down the track.

This was good legislation in the last parliament. It is good legislation in this parliament. I am pleased that everyone—although there are some negative nellyies—is going to support it. It is good legislation. I commend it to the House.