




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Electricity Supply

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (5.44 pm): Tonight I rise to support the amendment to the motion because I know that electricity input costs are an important issue for Queensland businesses right across the state of Queensland, especially as we continue our regional economic recovery. This is a particularly important issue for those in regional Queensland—and I am very proud to be the Minister for Regional Development—and critical to the long-term success of manufacturers that I also advocate for every day in my role as the Minister for Manufacturing.

The manufacturing sector contributes more than \$20 billion annually to the state's economy and, more importantly, it employs over 163,000 people. That represents around seven per cent of the state's total workforce, and I am proud to say that 25 per cent of those jobs are in regional Queensland. These jobs support families, they support people buying a house and they build strong regional communities. I stand here today not just as a minister and community representative from a great community in Gladstone but also as someone who knows this all firsthand. I raised my family in regional Queensland, working in Gladstone's energy intensive alumina refinery and manufacturing industry. That local supply chain alone supports thousands of jobs in Gladstone and surrounding regions. To continue to secure regional jobs for the future, these manufacturers need growth in the generation and the transmission of cheaper, cleaner energy delivered through the national energy market.

We are continuing on our plan to bring prices down in Queensland. We have the energy trifecta—the lowest average wholesale price on the eastern seaboard, reliable supply, and a planned expansion to a renewable energy future. Queensland manufacturers can feel secure in their future under this government. Wholesale prices have almost halved since 2016-17. We are investing in hydrogen, we are investing in gas and we are investing in renewables. We are investing in CopperString 2.0 and, through my department's Queensland manufacturing hubs network, we are working every single day to help deliver them and build energy literacy and make improvements for their energy usage and efficiency, thereby lowering energy bills in regional Queensland.

We have been doing this by working with Ai Group to undertake a project to conduct energy audits of 20 manufacturing businesses to determine their current usage and to identify savings and reduce the waste that they have in their businesses. This was based on a pilot program that found a number of opportunities for energy efficiency, including peak lopping, which is staggered starting of machinery to spread the load over time; more efficient compressors in their businesses as compressors which are consistently cycling through are a major energy user; heat recovery in those businesses; boiler tuning; and increasing energy literacy among business owners. We are also assisting manufacturers in regional Queensland to adopt new technologies such as robotics and autonomous systems, build skilled workforces and also introduce world's best practices.

Our government's Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan is being implemented in partnership with industry to help drive the transformation of our manufacturing industry to become even more competitive, access new supply chains and markets and generate new highly skilled jobs in Queensland. These initiatives will underpin the creation of thousands of minerals, mining and industrial manufacturing jobs for generations to come and stimulate large-scale renewable energy investment.

I am proud to be part of a government that backs Queensland's manufacturing jobs and I am pleased to support the amendment to the motion. Where would our Queensland manufacturers be if the LNP had its way? Our borders would be open, with jobs at risk, and our assets sold, with electricity prices skyrocketing. In 2012 those opposite went to the election promising no asset sales and lowering prices. By 2015 they were selling every energy asset that overseas accountants could get their hands on.

(Time expired)