




Speech By
Lance McCallum

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

Record of Proceedings, 24 March 2021

MOTION

Electricity Supply

 **Mr McCALLUM** (Bundamba—ALP) (5.16 pm): I rise to speak in support of the amended motion. I am always more than happy to stand in this House and talk about our government's record on public ownership of energy assets in Queensland. It is the Palaszczuk Labor government that stood shoulder to shoulder with workers and stood against the LNP's privatisation agenda. Who could forget the LNP's asset sales agenda in 2014 under Campbell Newman? It was a plan to sell off Queensland's energy assets right down to the poles and wires. My own Bundamba community has not forgotten and I know Queenslanders have not forgotten either.

It was the Newman LNP government that put Swanbank E power station into cold storage, sacked 25 workers and prepped it for sale. They started to close down Tarong Power Station and, if given the chance, they would not have stopped there. At our state owned energy providers—Energex, Ergon, Stanwell, CS Energy and Powerlink—as well as the ports of Gladstone and Townsville, the for-sale signs were printed and ready to go, but it was the Palaszczuk government, the trade unions fighting on behalf of their members, like the Electrical Trades Union, and an overwhelming number of Queenslanders that stopped their privatisation agenda. They said no to cutting, sacking and selling. They said that Queensland is not for sale.

As a result the Palaszczuk government has kept our energy assets in the hands of Queenslanders for the benefit of Queenslanders. Dividends do not flow overseas to multinational shareholders—as they would have under those opposite—but they go straight back into the pockets of Queensland families and businesses. Due to continued public ownership and well-considered policy, Queenslanders have enjoyed the lowest average wholesale electricity prices in the National Electricity Market for the past three years, and the benefits will continue to flow, with power prices forecast to fall a further 14 per cent over the coming three years.

At the height of the COVID pandemic, the Palaszczuk government was able to deliver \$600 million of genuine cost-of-living relief thanks to our publicly owned energy assets—with \$250 in utility rebates being rolled out to Queensland householders and \$500 to small businesses. For the benefit of the member for Traeger, I can report to the House that in North-West Queensland our government's relief package supported over 11,700 households and 1,800 small businesses to the tune of \$3.8 million. This is a direct result of continued public ownership and it would not have been possible if the LNP had sold our energy assets.

We all know that cleaner, cheaper energy means little unless there is security of supply. That is why since 2015 we have invested over a billion dollars in transmission and distribution infrastructure. As Queensland expands its renewable energy generation, it is this transmission infrastructure that will deliver our cleaner, cheaper electricity to homes and businesses across the state. That is why our government has also put \$145 million on the table to fund transmission infrastructure in our three renewable energy zones.

With expressions of interest for a further 192 projects, representing 60,000 megawatts of clean energy, we are encouraging even more investment by making it easier to connect to the national electricity market. Between Cairns and Townsville our initiative has attracted very strong interest from a variety of projects and primarily these projects will support the growing demand for new economy minerals extraction and processing that are critical components required for renewables and the new technology sectors. We also have our \$500 million Renewable Energy Fund for our publicly owned generators.

Townsville has long been the industrial hub of the north, and that is why Korea Zinc is investing millions of dollars in their Sun Metals zinc refinery to allow for future growth powered by clean energy. In 2018 Sun Metals built Australia's largest industrial solar farm and continues to set the pace for industry powered by renewable energy.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to securing an affordable and clean electricity supply for North Queensland. We are committed to supporting the economic and employment opportunities from renewables in the north and north-west of our state. It is a fact that on this side of the House all members acknowledge the significant opportunities presented by cleaner, cheaper energy.