




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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TRANSPORT AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (3.00 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Transport and Resources Committee Report No. 6, 57th Parliament, *Examination of Auditor-General Report 11: 2020-21: Energy 2020*, tabled on 21 June 2021.

I rise today to speak to the aforementioned report. As a measure of transparency and an important check and balance, we in Queensland have legislation that requires the Auditor-General to audit these financial reports of public sector entities such as our energy companies. They are responsible for providing parliament with independent assurance of the financial management of these public sector entities. The Auditor-General report we examined earlier this year and the subject of this committee report tabled in June summarises the financial audit results of Queensland's six state owned energy entities—CleanCo, CS Energy, Stanwell, Powerlink, Energy Queensland and Ergon Energy.

By way of overview from a former supply industry employee—for anyone who does not know how the network is structured—starting at the beginning of our chain are our generators: CleanCo, CS Energy and Stanwell. Then we have Powerlink in transmission. Energex and Ergon are distributors, now merged as Energy Queensland. We also have the national electricity market encompassing something like 40,000 kilometres of transmission lines which we call our poles and wires. This is where retailers and generators trade electricity. Ergon Energy Queensland is a retailer as well as a distributor. CS Energy and Stanwell also participate in the retail market.

Some interesting topics that came up in the examination of this report included: the need to stay one step ahead when it comes to security of online payments and information systems; the challenges of integrating renewable energy with existing coal-fired power, including its impact on pricing and demand as well as the rules of the energy market; and the impact of COVID-19 on last year's profits. They went down partly due to decreased demand.

I know that some people might find the audit of energy financials a little bit boring. The Transport and Resources Committee find it anything but boring. Our committee finds it sexy and very exciting. Luckily, the future of energy in Queensland is exciting. I take this opportunity to quickly congratulate the Premier, the Minister for Energy, Renewables and Hydrogen and the rest of our leadership team on the announcement over the weekend that we will partner with leading renewable energy and hydrogen company Fortescue Future Industries to build the world's largest hydrogen equipment manufacturing facility just outside of Gladstone.

As an electrician by trade—who did not know I was an electrician?—I am excited by the conversations that projects such as this and the pumped hydroelectric project at Borumba Dam are generating—no pun intended—amongst tradespeople in the sector, especially the growing recognition that moving to more clean energy options will bring jobs—not cost them—if we get it right.

It is also good that the Auditor-General can report on our state owned electricity network. The reason we can report on this is because we own the network. When the LNP were briefly in power it not only drove up the cost of electricity to consumers by over 40 per cent but, in my opinion, they could not manage running the network. They thought they would flog it off to the highest bidder.

In the days before I came to work at this place while working for Powerlink Queensland—which might surprise people like my colleague the member for Burleigh who thought I worked for a union—I would have been honoured to be a full-time union official, but I was a volunteer delegate in the workplace elected by my peers and a proud ETU member. I could not join the nurses' union or any fake unions. I am an electrician. I could only join the Electrical Trades Union. I am a proud member.

Anyway, back to Powerlink. In those days before the 2015 election, there was a procession of foreign business owners visiting, no doubt getting a feel of what they intended to buy from the then government. It was a terribly uncomfortable time for employees. Thank goodness we won the election and we still own those assets that are returning dividends into the accounts of electricity users.

This Auditor-General report shows that our electricity providers are doing the right thing when it comes to finances, with the finding that the financial statements of all the entities in the energy sector are reliable and comply with relevant laws and standards. Their entities prepared their financial statements in a timely manner. In reaching our recommendation as a committee that 'the Legislative Assembly note the contents of this report' we satisfied ourselves that the energy agencies have taken the appropriate action to address the Auditor-General's recommendations. I thank the committee and our hardworking secretariat—Deb, Zac and Amanda—for all the work they do. It is great to see that our system of checks and balances is working. I commend the report to the House.