



Speech By  
**Michael Berkman**


**MEMBER FOR MAIWAR**

---

Record of Proceedings, 9 November 2022

## ADJOURNMENT

### Electricity Prices

 **Mr BERKMAN** (Maiwar—Grn) (8.48 pm): A lot of Queenslanders have been relieved to see the \$175 rebate on their recent power bill, but alongside that relief is a sense of dread about what happens next when the rebate runs out. The federal budget projects that energy bills will increase by 56 per cent over the next two years. The Australian Greens have proposed a two-year freeze on electricity bills at pre-crisis levels funded by a windfall gains tax on coal and tax corporations. That plan would save Queensland households \$567 over the next two years, paid for by the obscene profits of these wartime energy profiteers. We need this urgent response to address the current crisis but we also need long-term action to cut energy bills, which is why today the Greens are calling on the state government to re-nationalise electricity retail.

Since Queensland Labor privatised electricity retail in 2006, prices have skyrocketed. While Queenslanders struggled, retail corporations like Origin and Energy Australia have made billions of dollars in profit by ripping us all off. Each year thousands of households and small businesses have their electricity cut off because they cannot pay their bills. I understand that Queensland has the highest rate of disconnections in the country. Instead of a complex series of private and public retailers, generators and networks, we need a single, democratic public authority to run our energy system. We should cancel private retailers' licences to operate, transfer their customers to a public retailer, and direct it to deliver electricity at or below cost.

One of the most laughable arguments put forward by proponents of privatisation is the idea that the free market is more efficient. Right now there are three major separate national organisations that exist just to make the private electricity market function. Public entities, including our state owned generators and networks, are forced to pay special fees just so they do not outcompete private corporations. We have over 12 separate private retailers spending millions of dollars on administration.

The logic of privatisation is particularly absurd when it comes to essential services. No-one cares how their energy is branded to compete in the so-called free market. We do not want to have to trawl through confusing comparison websites just to keep the fridge running. Privatisation has not delivered special, innovative or hyper-optimised energy. Electricity is electricity is electricity. Privatisation has simply allowed private corporations to profit from this thing we all need as a basic necessity.

This government can end the price gouging, the unnecessary marketing expenses and the bonuses for energy execs. They can do what they are supposed to do as a government—that is, deliver essential services cheaply and reliably to the people of Queensland. Alongside my federal colleagues' plan to tax fossil fuel companies and freeze energy bills, 100 per cent publicly owned energy is a long-term solution to keep energy costs low and loosen the grip of private corporations on all of our lives.

