



Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 20 August 2024


APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL

APPROPRIATION BILL

Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)

Appropriation Bill

Clean Economy Jobs, Resources and Transport Committee, Report

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (9.06 pm): I too rise to contribute to the debate on the estimates process for the energy portfolio. I give a big thank you and a shout-out to the opposition members of the committee, the member for Condamine, the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Callide, as well as the chair of the committee for allowing us—I think she just said—70 per cent of the time. However, even if we had had 100 per cent of the time it would not have been enough to examine this portfolio. I want to refer to some of the figures that were uncovered through the estimates process.

It was absolutely flabbergasting to hear about our major baseload power station at Callide. Members of this House know, over the three years since the explosion, how often we have asked the minister about what he knew, when he knew it, what he was going to disclose and when Professor Sean Brady could release his report. Just to the end of June, \$10.4 million was paid to Professor Sean Brady. That came out through the estimates process. What else came out was that, after spending I think around \$7 million on the consultant, neither the minister nor CS Energy had a clue about what went on.

When I questioned the CEO of CS Energy, he said that the minister did speak to him about the progress of the report but he did not communicate directly on the issue. It was uncovered through the estimates process that the minister did not bother to ask about the content of the report. This is the same minister who, in one breath, tarnishes the former executives at CS Energy but then says he did not know anything about it. The explosion happened and he tries to claim that he got rid of them because of the explosion, but when it comes to the timing the minister forgot that he had actually blamed it on them. He said, 'No, no. I didn't know anything until about June.' That was with CS Energy spending \$38 million, to date, in the cover-up of Professor Sean Brady's forensic report. They have spent about \$50 million and the minister does not think to ask some questions? No-one on that estimates committee and no-one sitting behind the minister believed him. Come on, Mr Deputy Speaker!

I now refer to the bonuses. We have a minister who says, 'No, I didn't think the execs of CS Energy or the chair were doing a good job so I got rid of them.' This is not the current CEO's fault; this is coming from the minister. Despite that, he approved \$300,000 worth of bonuses after he had said that he was not satisfied with the former executives. You cannot have it both ways, Minister. Which way were you trying to go here?

How many units are actually going as of today? One. Where is this energy minister? Some \$50 million of taxpayers' money is down the drain. I will take that back. In his draft report, forensic engineer Sean Brady gave some very good answers as to what went wrong. The reasons lay at the feet of the minister and the Treasurer, the shareholding ministers. In the final report, miraculously those results were taken out. We have to ask why.

There are more questions to be asked of this duplicitous minister when it comes to the report by Professor Sean Brady, and the minister knows it. I look forward to the minister's clarification about when he knew about what was going on and why he approved a ministerial direction that turned down funding requests from CS Energy. Everyone who works within Callide Power Station—they all want to talk to us because they know that the government is not listening—will tell us the real story. That is, this government failed to maintain our baseload power stations and this has driven up our energy prices by 20 per cent, three times the national average. They should hang their heads in shame.

(Time expired)