



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Energy

SPEECH

Monday, 22 May 2017

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker	Littleproud, David, MP	Question No.	

Mr LITTLEPROUD (Maranoa) (11:31): I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Australian Government for its sensible and pragmatic approach to ensuring energy security and affordability in Australia;
- (2) acknowledges that balancing our energy supply through the use of clean-fired coal, renewable energy sources and liquefied gas will be key to the Australian Government's approach;
- (3) notes that:
 - (a) Queensland is home to a number of coal-fired stations and is advancing a number of renewable energy projects, placing it in a prime position to become an energy hub; and
 - (b) the coal industry directly employs over 44,000 people and pays over \$5.7 billion in wages and salaries; and
- (4) condemns the Federal Opposition and Queensland Government for their reckless and unrealistic renewable energy targets of 50 per cent, which only serve to threaten energy security and jobs, as well as drastically escalate the cost of electricity for individuals, businesses and industry as a whole.

I am proud to be part of a government that is approaching energy policy in such a sensible and pragmatic way, because getting this mix right is so important. It is so important to business, households and the jobs that employ Australians, particularly in the coal sector. Forty-four thousand Australians are employed in the coal sector in Australia today, which is \$5.7 billion worth of wages.

Getting that balance right for households is important. I sat in the community of Warwick in only the last couple of weeks and talked to pensioners about the rising cost of electricity, about how that was impacting on the decisions they make as we go into winter about how much they will use heating in their own houses. It will also affect small businesses. I was out in Eulo, a little community west of Cunnamulla, in September last year. They are now making the decision not to open their general store in summer because of the rising cost of electricity. In Meandarra, another little community just south of Chinchilla, the local cafe owner is in the same predicament because of the rising cost of electricity. Getting a sensible and pragmatic policy setting in place that will ensure that we responsibly move on meeting our international targets with respect to renewable energy is imperative.

It has to be a sensible one. We have seen what has happened in South Australia. In fact, Business SA came out only last week in an inquiry on the policies that have been put in place in South Australia that have contributed to the increase in unemployment to 7.3 per cent and the \$450 million that was lost in the South Australian economy during that blackout because of the ideology of the South Australian government in not understanding the pragmatic impacts that not getting those settings right will have on each and every one of us within our communities.

I am fortunate enough to live in an electorate that is an energy hub. We have three coal-fired power stations in my electorate at Tarong, at Millmerran and at Kogan Creek. To put it in perspective, in Queensland alone 70 per cent of our energy supply comes from coal, 18 per cent comes from gas and only 4.4 per cent comes from renewable energy. So, if we go down the path the Palaszczuk Labor government wants to in Queensland to a 50 per cent Renewable Energy Target by 2030, we will need to see a 45 per cent increase in renewable energy output by 2030. That is not a responsible way to treat energy and electricity prices for the consumers across Queensland—or the nation, as we are seeing other state governments come in.

To put it into perspective: if you look at wind energy, it is around \$140 a megawatt hour. Solar is about \$100, gas is \$80, and coal is \$40. So we have that seismic shift in the generation of our energy sources. You are going to put considerable strain on local economies, on small businesses, pensioners and households that are struggling to keep themselves to keep themselves alive in a competitive world. We are putting too much pressure on small businesses, particularly those in regional and rural Australia that are the heart and soul of my communities that employ nearly everybody. I do not have big corporates in my electorate; I am fortunate that I have small businesses that are passionate about their communities and what they are doing.

Making sure that we have a sensible and pragmatic approach to get this setting right is imperative. It is also beholden to on our state governments, and particularly the Palaszczuk Labor government, to ensure that the cost of generation is one piece of the puzzle of electricity costs. We cannot let state governments off the hook on this, particularly in Queensland, where government-owned corporations are controlling the distribution of electricity across the state. The dividends they are taking out of these companies at the expense of each and every one of us are something every state government needs to understand and needs to start to wean themselves off. Effectively it is a tax by stealth on each of us by these state governments which have become beholden on those dividends to keep them afloat. They need to structurally adjust the way in which they do that because it is not the everyday Australians who should be bearing the tax of a state government or the distribution arm of this policy.

Getting this setting right is so imperative for the future of this nation and for the states. I am proud to say that in my electorate we do have renewable energy—wind, solar, gas and geothermal. We are in an energy hub, but we need to progress that in a pragmatic and sensible way which will take this nation forward and which will pull the economic levers to give wealth to each and every one of us.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bird): Is the motion seconded?