



David Littleproud MP

Federal Member for Maranoa

Surat Basin News column

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Having problems paying your power bill? Maranoa MP calls for honesty contracts and tariff concessions for rural customers

I AM calling for the Labor State Government to put people ahead of profits by introducing honesty contracts and provide tariff concessions as rural Queenslanders struggle to cope with sky-high electricity prices.

The Energy Markets Commission recently released a report and it found we're paying significantly more than we need to because consumers haven't received the necessary information or they've gone from a discounted power contract to higher-priced rates without being told – and that's why I believe honesty contracts must be introduced.

The Federal Coalition Government recently held power companies to account, demanding electricity providers inform customers of when their contract ends so consumers can switch providers or look for a better deal.

However, for Queenslanders living outside the South East corner, we don't have a provider choice and that's why I believe the State Government has a responsibility to regional customers to provide tariff concessions.

I welcome the Coalition's intervention but Ergon is our only choice out here – a provider the State Government owns and uses as a cash cow.

At the moment, the State Government doesn't make sure Queenslanders are on the best possible deal because they've got the monopoly on power and that's why it hasn't introduced tariff concessions for country people as we don't have a provider choice.

Instead of targeting high energy prices, Queensland Labor recently blamed farming practises and pensioners for not claiming the discounted rate – a move I label disgusting and totally out-of-touch.

How can Labor – in good conscience – milk \$1.5 billion from state-owned generators and distributors and let seniors and families doing it tough balk at turning on an air-conditioned because they're frightened of the next power bill? It's absolutely disgusting and it has to stop.

The State Government's 2017-18 Budget forecasted a \$1.5 billion windfall over the forward estimates from the state-owned generators – that's a 110% increase on the dividend contained in the 2015-16 Budget.

As rural customers have no choice, we're also subsidising Qld Labor's reckless rush to increase renewable energy from 4% to 50%, within 13 years, and I fear this will turn electricity into a luxury that our most vulnerable won't be able to afford.

There are some exciting proposed renewable energy projects in Maranoa but I also believes coal remains a vital part of our state's baseload system, which should not be replaced with something intermittent and very costly.

FACT BOX: Having problems paying you bill?

- Your energy retailer has to help so contact them, as soon as possible, because it can offer payment plans and/ or hardship help.
- Be sure to ask about concessions, rebates, different tariff rates and discounted rates (eg: senior's discount or if you're a low income earner).
- Contact the National Debt helpline on 1300 303 143.

–ENDS–

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