



Mark Boothman MP
Member for Albert

Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill

Mr BOOTHMAN (Albert—LNP) (9.42 pm): I rise to make a short and sharp contribution to the Electricity and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. As outlined in the Transport Utilities Report No. 16, opposition committee members highlighted their concerns and acknowledged that the merger between Energex and Ergon is an election commitment of the Labor government which is not the most prudent but which is their commitment. As I continually state in this house, the Albert electorate is the home of the tradie. The construction industry is a key cornerstone for employment in our area. These are aspirational people. They are proud of their small businesses and of being small business owners, and all they ask is a fair go, none more so than the large sector of electrical trade specialists in my electorate. These hard-working mum-and-dad businesses are the embodiment of the Australian economy. They suffer ups and downs, booms and busts, and all they ask is a fair playing field so that they can exist. These smaller electricity businesses support local suppliers, other trade workers and service industries.

Mr Cramp: And apprentices.

Mr BOOTHMAN: And apprentices. It is a domino effect that has deep ramifications on our local economy, a fact that the Labor government has failed to realise. As stated in the explanatory notes of the bill, 'A separate energy service business will be established under the Parent Co', and this will compete against local small businesses. In the Treasurer's own words, a new energy service business will be established as a subsidiary of the parent company, a parent company with limitless backing. Many local electricians see solar panel installations as bread-and-butter jobs. There is much competition between businesses for this niche market. Whilst competition is welcomed by the consumer, at what expense? We hear about multinational companies undercutting, outbidding for work, squeezing small businesses out of existence. It is a matter about which most Australians are extremely passionate. 'Supporting Aussie businesses, giving Aussie business a fair go'—we see it in the media, we hear it on the streets and we hear it at our local P&C meeting.

While setting up an energy business is a way of dealing with 366 redundancies, as highlighted in a question on notice to the Treasurer, protecting small family business interests should be paramount for any government, and a failure to do so will only add to the ever increasing unemployment lines in Queensland, not just of those businesses but their suppliers and apprentices. This is none more so than in the regional areas.

I also note the low number of submissions received by the committee. This informs Queenslanders that this frozen-at-the-wheel Labor government lacks transparency and does not wish to be taken to task for its legislation. I am very supportive of the comments of opposition members of the committee. I am gravely concerned about the effect of this bill on my local small businesses and about any benefit this merger will have for power supply in Queensland.