

TASMANIA'S ENERGY STRATEGY

Matter of Public Importance

[11.17 a.m.]

[Mr BOOTH](#) (Bass - Motion) - [Mr Speaker](#), I move -

That the House take note of the following matter: Tasmania's energy strategy.

[11.40 a.m.]

[Ms WHITE](#) (Lyons) - [Mr Speaker](#), we need to make sure we maintain a strong and reliable energy sector; it is essential for all Tasmanians. People want to know they can flick a switch and the lights will come on; businesses want to know if they come to [Tasmania](#) they can be assured of an energy supply. We have to realise that things have changed. Twelve years ago we disaggregated and five years ago we entered the National Electricity Market. We understand now that it is time to review the situation.

The Labor Government is and always will be committed to looking after our low-income households and making sure they are protected from these price increases. We have also committed to maintaining public ownership of our energy assets, so what we have to do is ensure the viability and sustainability of our energy sector. We understand nationwide that price increases are occurring, and historically Tasmanians have enjoyed quite low energy prices in comparison. But the Tasmanian Government made the move to look after the most vulnerable in our society by providing the \$ 100 rebate or cash injection, whatever you may like to call it, to concession cardholders which effectively assists 40 per cent of our population, recognising that they may not be able to afford the increase in their power prices.

I know for a fact as well, having campaigned extensively, that cost-of-living pressures would be the number one issue raised with me, and I am proud to say that Labor is looking after these people. What we also need to do is strike a balance between assisting low-income earners and investing in our infrastructure for our energy sector, and that is why the Government has been working closely with the utilities to understand their immediate challenges and long-term sustainability for their businesses, because it is important, as I mentioned earlier, that we maintain confidence in them for both our business community and everyday regular consumers of power.

We understand that the market is not operating as well as we would like. Aurora has indicated that its input costs are greater than its ability to recoup that cost through their retail arm. As the minister also said, we are an island State with a small population and our ability to maintain what we have been doing does not appear to be working, so we need to

conduct this review, which is what has happened. The expert panel we are discussing at the moment and the make-up of that and its ability to investigate will help us understand what we can do to maintain the long-term viability and sustainability of our energy sector.

In the short term the Treasurer will be given the ability to regulate the wholesale price of energy to make sure that we maintain the viability of our energy assets. I have to say that I am very pleased to see that we are taking action on this matter. It is important to me as Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business to ensure we maintain business confidence in our State and that we do keep the lights on in [Tasmania](#). It would be a shame to see anything put that at risk, but ultimately it comes down to balancing what we do here in making sure we not only look after the most vulnerable in our community but also keep investing in that infrastructure to make sure we build a strong economy going forward.

I think our actions today have prevented shortages and blackouts and will provide business confidence in what we do here, so I would just like to note my support for the Government's actions in this regard.

Matter noted.

TAXATION AND RELATED LEGISLATION
(MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 2010 (No. 13)

Second Reading

Adam Brooks MP

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