

~~Around Warwick there are localities such as Tannymorel, Freestone, Gladfield, Goomburra, Maryvale, Emu Vale, Mount Colliery, Swanfels, Murrays Bridge, Pratten, Sandy Creek and Karara. Around Goondiwindi we have North Talwood, South Talwood, Bungunya, Toobeah, Lundavra, Tarawera, Kioma, Kinson, Billa Billa, Yagaburne and Wondalli. In the north surrounding Millmerran are communities such as Cecil Plains, Condamine Plains, Lemontree, Yandilla, Pampas, Canning Creek and Leyburn.~~

~~The economic base of Southern Downs is founded on primary industries, tourism and services. We have large and efficient industries in beef, sheep, dairy, grain, cotton, forestry and fruit and vegetables, and we think that ours are among the most productive primary industries in the country. I note with delight that on every menu I have seen here at Parliament House produce and wines from Southern Downs take pride of place, and rightly too, and it would be terrific to see this example followed at this year's Commonwealth Games.~~

~~We are also blessed with a vibrant services sector across our towns. Small businesses abound in catering for domestic, rural and industrial demands, and their operators—often families generations old—proudly serve their customers and communities through thick and thin, good times and bad. Tourism is very important in Southern Downs. Our B&Bs, wine and fruit tourism, festivals and, in Stanthorpe, Queensland's coldest climate make Southern Downs a favourite for visitors.~~

~~Southern Downs is home to some very innovative large and emerging businesses such as the meat processor John Dee and fruit juice producer Grove Juice in Warwick, Australian Vinegar, Jamworks Gourmet Foods and Sweet's Strawberry Runners in Stanthorpe, the new Darwallah chicken hatchery in Allora and Carpendale Commodities and the Woods Group of companies around Goondiwindi. These businesses demonstrate that the future for industry does not exclusively lie in the big cities. It equally can be in electorates like Southern Downs where costs are low, where interstate and international markets are now easily at hand and where life is good.~~

~~What all of those industries have in common is that they are comprised overwhelmingly of small businesses and small farms. They are family concerns where proudly independent people with passion and ideas work very hard and invest with no certain outcome in order to create jobs and incomes and to generate the tax revenues upon which our necessary public sector activities and welfare measures depend. These small businesses contribute so much to the social and economic fabric of my electorate and our state. What they and the people who depend upon them need are a great business environment where governments tax and regulate sparingly, keep energy prices under control and provide the water and transport infrastructure that industry needs to be competitive, thrive and employ people.~~

~~I end my maiden speech where I began, in thanking the people of Southern Downs for giving me the honour of being their member in this parliament. I truly look forward to playing my part in this place as a faithful representative of my part of this great state.~~

~~Debate, on motion of Mr Lister, adjourned.~~

ELECTRICITY AND OTHER LEGISLATION (BATTERIES AND PREMIUM FEED-IN TARIFF) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. AJ LYNHAM** (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (3.56 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Electricity Act 1994, the Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006 and the National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) Act 2014 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Electricity and Other Legislation (Batteries and Premium Feed-in Tariff) Amendment Bill.

Tabled paper: Electricity and Other Legislation (Batteries and Premium Feed-in Tariff) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

I wish to advise the House that this bill was introduced in the 55th Parliament by my colleague Minister Bailey and this explanatory speech is essentially the same. The Electricity and Other Legislation (Batteries and Premium Feed-in Tariff) Amendment Bill makes a number of amendments in relation to the non-reversion policy in regional Queensland, the Solar Bonus Scheme and embedded networks.

This bill brings into effect the Queensland government's decision to remove the restriction on residential and small business customers in regional Queensland from returning to Ergon Retail. This restriction is commonly referred to as the non-reversion policy and was introduced 10 years ago.

Nonreversion has proved very successful in encouraging competition for large customers in regional Queensland—nearly 50 per cent of these customers on the east coast have switched from Ergon Retail. However, competition for small customers has not materialised, with only one per cent going to market contracts. Consequently, the Queensland government reconsidered the effectiveness of this policy for small customers and listened to the concerns raised in regional communities. Because nonreversion was introduced as a state-specific modification to the National Energy Retail Law, these amendments need to be made to remove the restriction.

These amendments are also about fairness, as all eligible small customers in regional Queensland will be able to consider whether the EasyPay Rewards package announced in October last year is appropriate for them. Under this package, Ergon Retail customers can receive an up-front payment—\$75 for households and \$120 for small businesses each year. The Solar Bonus Scheme amendments seek to remove ambiguity around when Solar Bonus Scheme customers can install energy storage systems, like batteries, and secondary generation systems. The bill makes clear the circumstances in which customers can install energy storage systems and secondary generators in their homes without putting their Solar Bonus Scheme payments at risk.

The bill also rules out the practice of oversizing Solar Bonus Scheme systems. Oversizing occurs when the overall size of solar panels exceeds the size of the solar inverter approved for use under the scheme. Oversizing has become easier with advances in technology and has the potential to increase scheme costs beyond what were anticipated when the scheme was designed. I do recognise there will be situations—such as warranty replacements and system reinstallations following disasters—where a customer has no choice but to oversize, particularly because original panel sizes are no longer available. I anticipate a pragmatic approach will be taken by the electricity distribution businesses to compliance and enforcement. Solar Bonus Scheme aspects of the bill are proposed to commence retrospectively from the date of introduction. This provides clarity.

A new framework to make it easier for embedded network customers to choose an alternative electricity supplier commenced in Queensland on 1 December 2017. The changes to the national electricity rules will enable embedded network customers to participate in the retail electricity market by allowing them to choose the products, services and suppliers of retail electricity services that suit them best. Common examples of embedded networks include shopping centres, apartment buildings, retirement villages and caravan parks. The changes will not prevent embedded network operators from continuing to sell electricity to the embedded network, but it will incentivise them to compete with retailers. The changes are part of a national market-wide reform program to give electricity consumers more opportunities to understand and take control of their electricity use and costs.

To support these changes, it is necessary to amend the Electricity Act 1994 to ensure there is no inconsistency with the national framework. This bill will also ensure that eligible embedded network customers who decide to purchase their electricity from a chosen retailer will have access to the free dispute resolution services of the Energy and Water Ombudsman Queensland, just as direct customers can. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading

Hon. AJ LYNHAM (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy) (4.01 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee.

~~**Declared Urgent; Portfolio Committee, Reporting Date**~~