



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**Federation Chamber**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Energy**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 20 March 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<b>Date</b> Monday, 20 March 2017	<b>Source</b> House
<b>Page</b> 121	<b>Proof</b> Yes
<b>Questioner</b>	<b>Responder</b>
<b>Speaker</b> O'Brien, Ted, MP	<b>Question No.</b>

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**Mr TED O'BRIEN** (Fairfax) (11:52): I really enjoyed that last speaker. The religious zealotry comes out, yet again, from the Labor Party whenever this topic is discussed. There were a few accusations made: one being that the government continues to change its mind, because it supports one form of energy and then another form of energy. Now, as the Prime Minister made very clear at the beginning of this year and since: this government takes an agnostic approach when it comes to energy. That means that there are times when we will support renewables, there are times when we will absolutely support wind, solar and hydro, and there are times when we will also support gas and coal.

At the end of the day, our policy objectives are crystal clear. We need to ensure that we have energy security in this country. That means that we need secure, reliable and affordable energy. The objective is clear. Our disposition, being agnostic, is clear. It differentiates us from those opposite, because our approach is a pragmatic one. It is not one based on zealotry. It is not one that says the days of coal are dead and that it is all about renewables. It is one that says that we need to ensure we have energy security and we need to ensure that we deliver against our commitments under the Paris Agreement. In order to achieve those end objectives, we are happy to accept a myriad of energy sources—coal, of course, being key to it.

What we have, and the last speaker from the opposition made it clear, is a complete ignorance of the way the real market economy works. They love to speak big about the importance of not having uncertainty in this energy marketplace; however, at that very time you have Labor state governments with unrealistic renewable energy targets which are fundamentally flawed and are a disadvantage and a disincentive for capital to flow into Australia—and, indeed, domestic companies across Australia—because of state Labor governments.

We all know the disaster, the catastrophe, that has taken place in South Australia in recent months with the blackouts. In my state—I am a proud Queenslander—the Labor government has a 50 per cent renewable energy target, which is absolutely ludicrous. Anybody who has worked in business—and admittedly, in fairness to the opposition, very rarely do they have any members in this place with business experience—or who has done any shape of economics—and again, in fairness to them, they have very few with such a background—understands the importance of leveraging your strength; leveraging your core capability. One of our strengths as a country is our resources. One of the things that has led to our economy outcompeting other economies over the years has been the fact that we leverage our strengths, we leverage our resources—and that includes coal.

Members opposite might be interested to know, because the last speaker started to talk about the importance of jobs and then said that coal was not important, that in 2014 nearly 55,000 direct jobs and 145,000 indirect jobs were created by the coal industry—let alone the role played by this industry in keeping other companies and other industries alive, allowing their economies to move forward. On top of that, what we have is an industry that also has the ability to lift people out of poverty in some emerging markets. Literally hundreds of millions of people in the world today do not have electricity, but Australian coal can solve that problem. It is for these reasons that I reject the ludicrous claims of religious zealotry from the opposition and am very happy to support this motion.