



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

**SPEECH**

**Thursday, 23 March 2017**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

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<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) (15:36): I have to say I was originally a little bit confused when I read the wording of the topic for the matter of public importance today: 'The government's continued failure to address the national energy crisis'. It just seemed like a free kick for the coalition. Maybe the Labor Party is admitting that the state Labor government in South Australia is responsible for the recent blackouts, with a RET of 50 per cent. There is no jurisdiction in the world that has more intermittent renewables per capita than South Australia. I cannot think for the life of me of any jurisdiction in the developed world that is experiencing more blackouts than South Australia.

A government member: There is a connection.

**Mr TED O'BRIEN:** Indeed there is a connection and indeed that government needs to be held to account. Or maybe the Labor Party are talking about the Victorian Labor government, where the Renewable Energy Target is 40 per cent, a state where they are going to see the closure of the Hazelwood power plant, a state that despite wanting to close coal is determined to maintain a moratorium against the exploration of gas. Or maybe it is not actually the South Australia or Victorian governments to which this topic relates but in fact the Queensland state government.

The Queensland Labor government currently govern a state that has only four per cent renewables. Guess what their energy target is? It is 50 per cent. It has gone from four per cent up to a whopping 50 per cent. Imagine what will happen to the state of Queensland if they actually seek to pursue that. South Australia's is indeed an example. The previous speaker referred to North Korea of all places. Maybe that is indeed the beacon of hope for the South Australian government.

But let's get back to Queensland. It is four per cent and the state government wants to raise it up to 50 per cent. Do you know that will cost \$27 billion from the Queensland state government? This is a state government that is dragging its heels on trying to invest in infrastructure. The Queensland state government is a state government that is refusing to complete studies that would enable a joint Commonwealth and state investment in major infrastructure. It is not interested in roads, not interested in rail but, I tell you what, is more than happy to look at more than \$30 billion to try to match South Australians energy disaster. Maybe therein lies the insight as to what the topic is all about today.

You might ask the question: what if the Labor Party actually won federal government? Guess what, federal Labor have 50 per cent renewable energy targets so they are doing the same. They have a 45 per cent emissions reduction target, double that of the coalition's. There will be forced closure of coal-fired power plants and of course they do want a revised carbon tax. The major instrument that has reduced electricity prices around this country in recent years has actually been the coalition's abolition—taking away Labor's carbon tax.

How much would this cost, this Labor plan that basically closes coal and stops gas? It would be \$48 billion. That is right. That would be \$5,000 per household under Labor's plan. Whereas what you see from the coalition side is action in trying to fix Labor's mess at the state level, action with the Snowy Hydro scheme that will deliver the largest storage capacity has this country has ever seen, action by ensuring that we get a commitment from the gas players to make gas available for peak demand, and a plan for the future with Alan Finkel yet to deliver his report.

What we have from Labor is an 'ism'. It is an ideology; that is all it is. We have pragmatism here; they have ideologues on the other side. We believe in security and affordability; they believe in getting preferences from the Greens. We take an agnostic approach; they take a religious zealotry approach. We believe in economics and engineering, and they just believe in false gods.