

## Legislative Council

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### AUSTRALIAN ENERGY MARKET COMMISSION ESTABLISHMENT (CONSUMER ADVOCACY PANEL) AMENDMENT BILL

**The Hon. A. BRESSINGTON** (11:36): I rise today to briefly indicate my support for the second reading of this bill. This bill complements the National Electricity (South Australia) (National Electricity Law Miscellaneous Amendments) Amendment Bill for which I will indicate my support tomorrow. This proposes amongst other things to establish a consumer advocacy panel designed to advocate on behalf of consumers in decisions relating to the energy market.

This bill recognises the need for active participation by energy users and suppliers for the development of a more efficient and adaptable energy market. I share some of the reservations of the Hon. Rob Lucas, particularly about the potential effectiveness of the panel and where the money assigned to it will be allocated. However, I also appreciate the need for a formalised body to represent small to medium consumers and, for that reason, I support this bill. I also indicate very briefly my support for the national electricity miscellaneous amendments.

This bill seeks to make key reforms to the National Electricity Law. Under this legislation the regulation of electricity distribution networks will be made more efficient by allowing a single regulator, the Australian Energy Regulator, to regulate all distribution networks in the national electricity market. The combination with earlier reforms to transmission network regulation will make certain that the national electricity market has a single national regulatory framework for electricity networks. As other members have noted, South Australia is the lead legislator with our decision setting the framework for other states as part of the national electricity market. Our decisions are therefore very important. This bill is sensible and warranted.

I support the establishment of a regulatory framework to provide an acceptable balance between providing certainty for network businesses and avenues for consumer protection. I am confident that this bill will strengthen and improve the quality, efficiency and national make-up of the economic regulation of the national electricity market. I am all for legislation that will reduce the cost of regulation and simplify it for investors, increase regulatory certainty, and decrease competition barriers.

Electricity has long been a controversial issue in this state; however, I am confident that this bill will deliver positive outcomes to South Australians. Having said that, I note the concerns of the Hon. Rob Lucas once again, and I look forward to the minister's response during the committee stage.