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MEDIA RELEASE

AUSGRID PRIVATISATION

GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

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Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC and the Christian Democratic Party have tirelessly represented the interests of working Australians, especially in key industries without which basic services would not be afforded to the public. On 3 June 2020, Rev Nile delivered an Adjournment Speech to the Legislative Council concerning the government's apparent dishonesty in dealing with Ausgrid employees. The speech, which illustrates the context of the controversy, is extracted below from the parliamentary *Hansard*:

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE (15:13:04): A pillar of the Christian Democratic Party is to champion the interests of honest and hardworking Australians who make up the bedrock of our economy. Every worker has a family who doubtless relies on that worker's employment to support the household. Accordingly, all legislation that touches upon industry or infrastructure reform, or touches upon employment issues, goes through the test of Christian fairness and equity. A constituent recently informed me that Ausgrid would lay off a number of workers: 200 in December 2019 and another 500 in 2020. When the Government decided to sell off the electricity network assets, specifically the infamous poles and wires that were the subject of a considerable amount of debate, the Christian Democratic Party was

successful in securing employment guarantee amendments to the relevant legislation. I recall saying in the House on 2 June 2015:

I intend to move strong employment protection guarantees in a series of amendments, such as: to protect for at least five years continued employment with the new employer ...

Schedule 4 to the Electricity Networks Assets (Authorised Transactions) Bill 2015, which passed with our amendments, states:

For the purposes of this Schedule, there is a 5-year employment guarantee period starting on 1 July 2015 and ending on 30 June 2020.

The schedule further states:

AER Final Determination for an electricity network SOC means the determination of the AER for the electricity network SOC published on 30 April 2015.

continuing employee means:

(a) an employee of an electricity network SOC, or

(b) an employee whose employment is transferred under this Act.

employment guarantee period means the period of 5 years starting on 1 July 2015 and ending on 30 June 2020.

After receiving the disturbing news of the planned sackings from my constituent, I asked a question of the Government on 14 November 2019:

Is it true that 200 workers are going to be made redundant this year from Ausgrid, followed by another 500 next year?

What action is the government taking to assist these sacked workers?

The Minister provided the following reply:

When the lease of Ausgrid took place in December 2016, employees became private sector employees in the Federal jurisdiction and transferred to employment with the new operator.

The legislation under which Ausgrid was transacted, the Electricity Network Assets (Authorised Transactions) Act 2015 (NSW), sets out the requirements for Ausgrid to maintain a minimum number of full-time equivalent employees up to 30 June 2020.

Ausgrid employees have the protection of their agreement, Ausgrid Enterprise Agreement 2018, which includes terms covering redundancy, redeployment and salary maintenance.

Employment issues are a matter for Ausgrid.

We are used to the part-answers or non-answers that are sometimes provided by the Government to questions such as these. However, the answer provided by the Minister is woefully inadequate. The legislation that was passed with our amendment was very clear. The workers of New South Wales deserve a more detailed, forthright and honest explanation. I hope that explanation will be forthcoming. [Time expired.]

Media inquiries

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