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LABOR WASTES TIME AND STALLS ENERGY BILL SAVINGS

Bill Shorten has today stalled legislation that will save billions of dollars on energy bills for Australian consumers by referring the abolition of the Limited Merits Review (LMR) process to a Senate Committee.

When in Government, Labor did nothing to rein in network costs which contributed to electricity prices going up over 100 per cent under them. Labor even admitted in its own election platform that “from 2007 to 2013, average retail electricity prices in Australia soared” and “skyrocketed” due to network costs.

Even though Labor did nothing when they had the chance, Labor then tried to claim that the Coalition’s announcement to abolish the LMR process was their policy all along.

In fact, Labor Energy Spokesman Mark Butler agreed the Government’s reform was urgently needed:

“Abolishing the Limited Merits Review we support and there has frankly been **too much time wasted over the last 12 months** from the Federal Government to actually make that happen. So we are glad it has finally happened.” *Mark Butler, Doorstop, Parliament House, 21 June 2017*

“We do [support]. It’s been something on the books now for a while. It’s been particularly an issue here in New South Wales where I am at the moment over the last 12 or 18 months, so **it’s good to see the Government finally taking action on this.**” *Mark Butler, Sky AM Agenda, 3 July 2017*

But Labor does not practice what it preaches. Labor should be true to its word and not waste any more time and vote on these reforms. Yet another instance of Labor saying one thing and doing another.

The Abolition of Limited Merits Review Bill 2017 seeks to address escalating electricity prices by strengthening the Australian Energy Regulator (AER) and removing the ability of energy networks to appeal its decisions.

Under the LMR regime, network businesses have appealed the AER’s decisions on 52 occasions, and the courts have ruled against consumers 31 times. On not one occasion did the consumer benefit.

Abolishing LMR would stop the energy networks’ ability to game the system, which has seen consumers pay \$6.5 billion more in energy bills since 2008 than would otherwise have been the case.

Network costs make up to 50 per cent of the household bill, making this an important reform which can make a real difference to consumer bills.

By referring this legislation to committee, Labor is showing that it cares more about unions and vested interests than it does about Australian households.

The Turnbull Government believes the independent regulator is best placed to protect consumers from unnecessarily high costs, while still ensuring energy networks receive a fair return.

Ends