



Speech by


**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR ALBERT**

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## **TREASURY (COST OF LIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (3.59 pm): The crippling costs of living are stifling households ability to stay afloat. The Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill is one that I urge this House to accept immediately, and I say this with the utmost conviction, because it is the wish of the electors of Albert—the individuals who have given me the opportunity to represent them in this parliament. Furthermore, failure to act on such an important bill will only create additional stress on Queenslanders.

I want to highlight some of the major issues causing grief to the Albert electorate. In my maiden speech I spoke of the diversity within Albert. This is an electorate which is home to a large mix of construction, industrial, mining, semirural and entertainment industries. Albert is the construction corridor of South-East Queensland which relies heavily on the income of the construction and manufacturing industries. In recent years the construction industry has faced considerable hardship. Incomes have almost ground to a halt. Tradies in the Albert electorate are now forced to travel far and wide to find employment. Every morning we are witness to tradies travelling further afield to find employment, placing even greater demands on their limited incomes.

On 1 August 2011 the previous government introduced the Building Boost strategy. This was a complete and utter failure. I want to paraphrase the Queensland Treasurer, the Hon. Tim Nicholls, who said that 'the former government has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars writing to residents in New South Wales and Victoria and over \$1.4 million in advertising a program that so far has failed to meet a 50 per cent uptake rate'. Once again, the Queensland taxpayer is forced to pick up the tab for the incompetence of those former government members who now warm the seats on the small opposition benches. To pay for its ineptitude, the previous government once again hit homeowners by removing stamp duty concessions on the family home. Again, the previous government showed its utter contempt for the average family and their ability to gain the great Australian dream—homeownership. In many circumstances the family home is the only way many families can build their wealth for future retirement needs.

During the election campaign I had the honour to speak to thousands of Albert residents who provided me with their views on how the cost of living is hurting them. I want to take this opportunity to loosely paraphrase one Albert resident—a gentleman who has been in the concreting industry all of his adult life. He said to me, 'I have always voted Labor. I felt the Labor Party was for the worker, but not anymore. They have lost their way. They have abandoned us. The building industry is dead. Every day is a struggle to find employment. We are slugged with increases in our power bills, our water costs and other charges.' This came from an individual who has honestly felt betrayed by a conviction he held his life to. Pensioners—individuals who have worked hard all of their lives—are suffering from these spiralling cost-of-living increases. During the campaign I had the privilege to speak to multiple elderly pensioners who unreservedly informed me that life has never been so tough. To prove this, the QCOS website states—

Our findings continue to show that many low income households are still unable to afford even the basic standards of living.

Low-income households continue to spend a greater share of income on the essentials like food, rent, electricity and transport whilst at the same time the cost of these essential items is rising much faster than the consumer price index. These unsustainable cost-of-living increases are a direct result of the previous government's inability to manage the fiscal budget and its inability to properly plan for the future.

Let us look closely at Traveston Dam. In 2007 the previous government purchased 478 properties at a cost of \$445 million. The current land value is less than \$220 million. The rusting and cracking Tugun desalination plant—a white elephant—has cost the Queensland taxpayer \$1.2 billion. This feels like a game show with no winners. But there is still more! The Wyaralong Dam cost \$350 million and all it is is a pond because the previous Labor government shelved plans to connect it to the water grid. The Health payroll saga has cost Queenslanders \$412 million. Most importantly, former Premier Peter Beattie promised in this parliament that power prices would not rise after he deregulated the market and former Premier Anna Bligh promised that she was not going to sell any assets.

To the people of Albert and Queensland, this is why the cost of living is increasing rapidly. Your money has been flushed away as a result of political disaster after political disaster. Furthermore, on a local level, the previous government wasted almost \$1 million on repairs to the John Muntz Causeway. These repairs failed their first test—the 2012 floods. This causeway should have been replaced 10 years ago with a more suitable structure. Again, it is a failure to plan ahead. The billions wasted by the previous government could have been used for something useful.

This is a good example. I have a school in my electorate that has a toilet block. This school does not actually have any toilets in that toilet block. However, I can tell honourable members that, to this day, they can go to that toilet block and plug in their laptop. They will get free internet because there are data connections in the toilet block but no toilets in the toilet block. There is plumbing in there. This issue has caused enormous anguish with the local principal in that school. They want facilities for their schools. The schools in my electorate are desperate for money. The amount of money that the previous government actually wasted has placed a heavy burden on our students.

The steep increases in the cost of living and the implementation of the carbon tax are creating an enormous uncertainty in our domestic economy. This continued pain is a blight on all Queenslanders. It destroys disposable incomes, which in turn limits the growth of our domestic economy. I wholeheartedly support the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is about making a real difference for the Albert residents and the people of Queensland as a whole. I say freeze tariff 11 prices, inform Queenslanders on their power bills about the real cost of the carbon tax, create jobs by increasing the payroll threshold, cut red tape and get Queenslanders back into work. The cost-of-living increases affect not only the hip pocket of Queenslanders but also our entire domestic economy. We need this bill to be passed to ensure the future growth of our economy and to ease the costs for residents.