


Mr WATTS: That is it, definitely. What else is there? The member for Woodridge spoke about people on fixed incomes and pensions. As I mentioned before, \$140,000 is borrowed to try to pay the interest on Labor's debt. These people she speaks of have faced average electricity price increases of \$700 over the last five years.

Members of the Labor Party are always talking about social justice and always talking about helping the working class person. I ask them: do they think that a \$700 increase over five years for a basic necessity like electricity to run a pensioner's fridge or to keep them warm in winter is helping their cost of living? I think not. By freezing this tariff we will help pensioners meet their obligations to balance their budgets. We understand that for people to balance their budgets we need to lower costs for people. We need to give them an opportunity to increase their wages.

I will explain it slowly for those who might not follow me. They can increase their wages by getting a promotion. That can happen only if, when they take the promotion, they do not have to pay an additional \$7,000 tax because they had to move house. They can balance their budget by saving money on electricity. That is what we are offering. We are offering the opportunity to save some money on electricity. Again, I am sure it would be more if we did not inherit \$85 billion worth of debt \$10,000 worth of debt a minute.

I commend this bill to the House. As I have listened to this debate I have noticed that those in the Labor Party still do not get it. Queenslanders have entrusted the LNP to deliver on its commitments and have given us an overwhelming mandate to get this state back on track. We need to urgently address the cost of living pressures for everyday Queenslanders, and this bill will do just that. I congratulate the Treasurer on the bill and the people of Toowoomba will thank him for it.

 **Mrs OSTAPOVITCH** (Stretton—LNP) (12:57 pm): I rise to speak on an issue that was fundamental to my election to this place. That is our promise to introduce this bill and continue to fight to keep the cost of living pressures down for all Queenslanders. I would like to use my time to draw members' attention to my own electorate of Stretton and give members some personal examples I encountered as I discussed this issue with locals within my community.

The fact is that, prior to my election, under the previous Labor government the people of Stretton were struggling with the increases to costs of everyday living. Basics like paying for electricity or the cost of running a car seemed to be getting harder. The prospects of young adults being able to afford a home or start a small business were becoming more and more daunting. Last winter I remember meeting with a group of elderly pensioners who would not turn on the heater due to the impact on their rising power bills. We have elderly people who were so terrified of Labor power bills that they would sit in a cold house freezing because they were too scared to put on the heater. There was even a couple who would bring in their garden solar lights at night so they could avoid turning on the lights.

It was a very bad situation. Now electricity bills are not going up by \$20 or \$30 a quarter; they are going up by hundreds of dollars. It is these kinds of increases that are hurting our vulnerable people. These vulnerable people in our community—our elderly and our families—are on tight budgets. These budgets have been blown out by cost increases. To say that these people did not know what hit them would be an understatement. It is these vulnerable people who have been working hard making ends meet who are most affected. They have been budgeting carefully. For years they have set aside roughly the same amount of money each week for food, for transport, for petrol, for electricity and so forth. But over the last few years the increases have spiralled out of control. Some of these vulnerable people are going into debt just to keep the lights on.


Some members of my community just cannot keep up and they are now turning to alternative sources for assistance such as charities. I have done a great deal of charity and community work in my life, and I applaud charities for all their hard work, but I am concerned to hear that charities such as the Salvos, the Tribe of Judah and others have all been reporting more and more people coming to them for food parcels. Times are tough and we as a government should not let charities bear the burden of past failures if we can do something about it.

Sitting suspended from 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm.

Debate, on motion of Mrs Ostapovitch, adjourned.

CRIMINAL LAW (FALSE EVIDENCE BEFORE PARLIAMENT) AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Criminal Law (False Evidence Before Parliament) Amendment Bill.

Tabled paper: Criminal Law (False Evidence Before Parliament) Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

I am pleased to introduce the Criminal Law (False Evidence Before Parliament) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill fulfils the Queensland government's pre-election pledge that within our first 100 days of forming government we would make it, once again, illegal to lie to parliament—that is, that we would re-enact repealed section 57 of the Criminal Code which contained the offence of false evidence before parliament. As per the government's pre-election commitment, the drafting of these amendments commenced within the first 30 days of forming government.

This government has been clear in giving to the people of Queensland an undertaking to restore accountability in government. This is a central part of our action plan in government. This bill contributes to restoring accountability in government.

The Queensland community expects its parliamentarians to act responsibly and with the highest of integrity. This bill reintroduces the criminal offence of giving false evidence to parliament or its committees. Knowingly giving false evidence before the parliament or one of its committees is conduct cutting to the heart of parliamentary privilege and is conduct deserving of criminal sanction.

This government has pressed to restore this offence which was repealed under the previous administration. Our commitment to reintroduce this offence means that, by allowing the courts to deal with this conduct, issues of cronyism and political interference are addressed. Further, the criminal justice system is better equipped to judge the veracity of an accused's evidence while ensuring the accused is afforded full procedural fairness. The reintroduction of section 57 into the Criminal Code can only serve to enhance the reputation of our parliament. I will briefly address the specific amendments.

The bill amends the Criminal Code to reintroduce the repealed section 57 (False evidence before Parliament), with amendment, to make it an offence to knowingly give false evidence to parliament or its committees. A maximum penalty of seven years imprisonment applies.

It is acknowledged that there is a tension between an offence like section 57 and the parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech. The offence contemplated by section 57 cannot be prosecuted effectively if evidence cannot be brought before a court of the parliamentary proceeding in which the allegedly false evidence was given. As the elements of the offence occur during the debates or proceedings of the Assembly, use of the evidence would on its face breach the law with respect to parliamentary privilege.

The amendment expressly deals with this tension. New section 57 makes it clear that parliamentary privilege of freedom of speech and debate is abrogated to the extent necessary to prosecute the person for the offence. The new provision clarifies that the offence applies to members of parliament as well as non-members.

Further, a complementary amendment to the Parliament of Queensland Act 2001 is included. This amendment is made to ensure consistency of operation within the Parliament of Queensland Act by making it plain that answers given before the Legislative Assembly are treated in the same way as answers given before a committee in terms of their admissibility in a criminal proceeding or a proceeding before the Assembly or its committees.

The Legislative Assembly will retain the right to decide whether particular conduct should be dealt with as a contempt of parliament or whether it should be prosecuted under the new offence.

The bill signifies the government's intention to bring back accountability in government. This bill reinstates the criminal offence of giving false evidence to parliament or its committees. These amendments will ensure accountability is restored to this place. I commend the bill to the House.

First Reading



Hon. JP BLEIJIE (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (2.34 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mrs Cunningham): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee.

~~**ANIMAL CARE AND PROTECTION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT**~~