



Speech by

Hon. Stephen Robertson

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Healthy Food Access Basket Survey

Hon. S ROBERTSON (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.17 am): The cost of food is something that affects us all. There is no doubt that rising petrol prices and the drought are having a major impact on food costs. Just how much more we are paying for basic healthy foodstuffs may surprise many Queenslanders. Queensland Health conducts a regular survey of food prices using a standard basket of breads and cereals, meat, fruit and vegetables, dairy products and other staples that would feed a family of six for two weeks. The latest 2006 healthy food access basket survey compares current food prices to what we paid in the year 2000. It reveals that Queensland families are paying an average \$149 more for the same basket of food than they paid in 2000—a 49 per cent increase. In 2000 the sample basket cost an average \$304 to feed a family of six. Today that same basket costs an average \$453.

The survey also shows that families living in very remote areas of Queensland are paying up to \$113 more than families in Brisbane for the same food basket and food prices have risen by up to 54 per cent in some regional Queensland communities since 2000. The survey of 47 food stores charted the rise in food prices between 2000 and 2006 and found that the average cost of the basket rose from \$299 to \$443, a 48 per cent increase, in major cities including Brisbane, Toowoomba, Ipswich and the Gold and Sunshine coasts; \$310 to \$463, a 49 per cent increase, in inner regional areas including Rockhampton, Mackay, Maryborough, Dalby and Bundaberg; \$309 to \$478, a 54 per cent increase, in outer regional areas including Cairns, Townsville, Bowen, Emerald and Goondiwindi; and \$347 to \$481, a 38 per cent increase, in remote areas including Charleville, Cooktown, Mount Isa, St George and Roma.

In 2000 the ACCC predicted that the cost of fresh food, including fruit and vegetables, would drop by 1.1 per cent during the first six months after the introduction of the GST. But between May 2000 and February 2001 it actually increased by 10.3 per cent and it has been soaring above the CPI ever since.

Rising food prices is a national issue demanding a national response. That is why I am calling on the Prime Minister today to authorise the ACCC to conduct a formal inquiry into food prices in Australia.