




Speech by

Fiona Simpson

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

Hansard Wednesday, 23 March 2011

MOTION: WATER ENTITIES

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (5.44 pm): I second the motion and I thank the member for Kawana for this motion. Queensland, beautiful one day, overtaxed the next under this 'can't-do' Labor government. Premier Anna Bligh and Labor cannot plan, they cannot manage money and they cannot fix what they break.

Government members interjected.

Ms SIMPSON: People are hurting and the Labor members are laughing in this parliament. They think it is funny that we are being contacted by constituents who cannot pay their bills. It is criminal that a major reason they cannot pay their bills is this government. The members opposite are laughing and scoffing about the fact that people are burdened by the highest cost of living increases that we have seen in decades. In fact, Queensland has gone from being one of the most cost-effective places to live in Australia to one of the most costly. People are hurting and their anger is mounting. Yet we hear Labor members in this parliament laughing about the cost of living. That is why they have no ability to address the issues, because they do not care about the damage that they have created.

The issue of cost of living hikes, particularly hikes for utility charges, is one of the hottest issues that constituents are talking about. They have a clear message to us when they say that this government has put a burden on them that they do not deserve. They want the government not just to listen, they want the government to act—but to act in their interests, not in the government's interests and not have all the spin and palaver, where Labor members sit in this parliament and laugh it off and scoff as if somehow it is not an issue. These constituents want action from a government that helps them, not ones that hurt them and everything that this Labor government has done with water has hurt Queenslanders in the way it has failed to plan. Unfortunately, the cost blow-outs on a \$9 billion water grid, a complicated and costly water bureaucracy and buck-passing by this government have added to the burden of Queenslanders. I think is an excellent suggestion by the member for Kawana for people to take their water bills and to use them as a how-to-vote card at the next election.

We hear about 'Barbara from bank world' who has this phrase, 'Not my problem.' Does that have a ring of familiarity to it when we look at this government and it says, 'Not my problem' when people say that their water bills have gone up, say, \$200 a year? Members of parliament in this place can afford to pay these bills. But the average Queenslanders cannot and I suspect that the members opposite have lost touch with those average Queenslanders who are really in pain. According to the Mortgage Choice annual Consumer Sentiment Survey, 27 per cent of respondents are worried about the cost of living compared to 17 per cent a year earlier. But with regard to the Queensland constituency, we have seen surveys that show that more than 70 per cent of people are struggling with the high cost of living. But like 'Barbara from bank world', we have Anna from 'pollie world' and she has no care. All she can say is, 'Not my problem.'

According to the *Courier-Mail*, last year Queenslanders spent \$43 million more on electricity and fuel bills compared to the previous year—up by eight per cent—and \$48 million on transport, a 10 per cent jump. Those increases come in addition to the water prices, which is the subject of tonight's motion, but, unfortunately, it is a subject of mirth for this government, which does not care and which has lost touch.

The state government's bulk water charge, which makes up a third of the cost of our water bills, has already gone up by more than 20 per cent since July 2010, with plans for further hikes over the next few years. My constituents and others throughout South-East Queensland are working hard to cut their water usage, but whatever they do they are still slugged because of the incompetence of this government.

In many cases they are slugged with a \$200-a-year increase in their water bills that they cannot afford. They want the government to listen. They want to see action. They do not want the mirth and the scoffing of this Labor government that has been there too long. I call on the state government to act now to fix the water pricing problems which have resulted in these huge hikes in water bills. More needs to be done to stop this price escalation that is way above CPI.