



Speech by


# Hon. Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Tuesday, 19 June 2012

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

 **Hon. AC POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection) (3.33 pm): It is my pleasure to make a very brief contribution to the debate on the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I have to say from the outset—

**Mr Nicholls** interjected.

**Mr POWELL:** That was long enough, was it, Treasurer?

**Mr Nicholls:** Hope it's a good one.

**Mr POWELL:** It is going to be a good one because this is good news. It is wonderful to be part of a new government with a new mandate and introducing a bill that is not about adding taxes for people, adding red tape for people but actually about making it easier for people to put money into their own pocket, to put money into savings, to pay for their kids' education and to put food on their tables. What is more, we are removing red tape in the process. It is wonderful to be part of a cabinet and a team that is bringing forward legislation that is about saving Queenslanders money, saving Queenslanders from the burden of unnecessary red tape and delivering real outcomes for businesses, individuals and families across this state.

As speakers before me have noted, there are a number of aspects to this bill. It amends the Duties Act to reinstate the transfer duty home concession. It amends the Payroll Tax Act to increase the exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$1.1 million. It amends the Electricity Act to freeze the regulated standard residential retail electricity tariff—tariff 11 as we commonly know it. It also amends the Building Act and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act regarding the sustainability declaration. I also note that it facilitates the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation. That in itself is an exciting move that will see this government make sure that the regulation we introduce and approve is of the highest quality possible.

A lot of speakers have spoken on each of the aspects of the bill, but I want to particularly focus on the Payroll Tax Act amendments, and possibly from a slightly different perspective from other speakers. The businesses in my electorate that are suffering the most under the Payroll Tax Act provisions are actually agricultural businesses. In my neck of the woods we have a number of strawberry farmers. Because of the very nature of their businesses, they end up having to pay payroll tax because of the high casual employment rates they have at the time of picking and packing.

The Treasurer met some of the strawberry growers in my electorate when he visited Palmwoods a year ago. This was the issue that they raised with the Treasurer. It is fantastic to be able to report back to them now that we are making amendments that will make it easier for them in the long term to operate their businesses. The great incentive for them is that, due to the payroll tax threshold increasing to \$1.1 million—and it goes from there—it frees them up to expand their businesses, to employ more casual

employees to pick and pack their strawberries each year and to ensure that there is more Queensland product in our markets and we are not having to import strawberries from other states like Victoria or further afield. That would mean that it is Queensland produce in our stores, that Queensland businesses are getting their feet on the ground and that Queenslanders are being employed.

I think this is a wonderful initiative. I look forward to us taking this initiative further and removing further disincentives for businesses, particularly successful businesses and, particularly in my patch, agricultural businesses.

This is one of a raft of changes we are making to deliver on our policy of driving down the costs of living for individuals, for families and for businesses around this state. I will use this opportunity to briefly mention that one of those changes is the removal of the waste levy. Effective 1 July this year, that levy will be zeroed out for each waste stream other than regulated waste.

**Mr Cripps:** Perverse.

**Mr POWELL:** It is a perverse levy. It is a tax by another name. Again, it is a disincentive for businesses, a disincentive for the recycling industry and a disincentive for local governments. All of the local governments that we spoke to were talking about the higher administrative costs that were going to be imposed as part of this levy. We spoke to those in the recycling industry who demonstrated to us that it would be cheaper for them to import timber from South-East Asian forests than to recycle timber poles from Energex, Ergon or the railways. It is wonderful to be the minister who introduces that regulatory change to take effect as of 1 July this year and to come back later in the year and remove the head of power within the act itself, the Waste Reduction and Recycling Act, to ensure that the levy is gone.

I also note that we are making changes with regard to such things as public transport. Again, that is a big issue in my electorate. I have a number of residents in my electorate who, like me prior to coming into this position, use the opportunity availed to them by the north coast rail line to commute from places such as Palmwoods, Landsborough and the Glasshouse Mountains to stations further south such as Caboolture and then onto Brisbane. I am ecstatic that my colleague the Minister for Transport and Main Roads is addressing some of these cost-of-living elements through his halving of the fare increases over the coming years from 15 per cent to 7½ per cent. I am further pleased to note that we are reintroducing the free travel after nine trips.

These are extraordinary outcomes for people, particularly for people from my home town of Palmwoods, who are going to be saving significant amounts of money. It will be savings in the order of \$600 to \$900 a year to travel from a place like Palmwoods into the Brisbane CBD. That is real money. There are people I know in my community who will be able to use that money to make sure their kids can participate in sport or to make sure their kids get a new pair of shoes to go to school. As I said when I started, it is fantastic to be part of a government that has a mandate and a policy that is about driving down the cost of living for Queenslanders. It is exciting to be able to contribute to this debate on the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.