



Speech by


# Anthony Shorten

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2012

---

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

 **Mr SHORTEN** (Algester—LNP) (12.04 pm): I rise today to speak to the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. It is useful to remind the House that this bill amends a number of acts including the Duties Act 2001, the Payroll Tax Act 1971, the Electricity Act 1994, the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997 and the Building Act 1975. The newly elected Campbell Newman led government is moving quickly to reduce the cost of living for struggling Queenslanders, as we promised we would do during the last election campaign. It is extremely disappointing that one of the first acts of the Labor opposition in this place was to try to delay the passage of this legislation. It was as if, after inflicting 20 years of hurt and misery on Queenslanders, the Labor Party still wanted to be part of the problem and not part of the solution. It just did not get the message that voters sent them on 24 March 2012.

This bill does a number of specific things. It reinstates the stamp duty home concession. It increases the payroll tax exemption threshold. It freezes tariff 11 prices for one year. It facilitates the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation and it removes the requirement for those sustainability declarations.

During the last election campaign I had a number of residents contact me in relation to the reintroduction of the stamp duty concession. They wanted to know when this would happen. I am happy to advise that it will be as of 1 July this year. I would like to relay to the House the impact that Labor's abolishment of this concession had on families in my electorate. I remember as clearly as if it were yesterday being approached by an elderly gentleman at the then Forest Lake markets, where I had my stall. He sidled up to me and asked about the LNP position on the transfer duty home concession. He went on to tell me that he was not asking for himself but for his daughter. His daughter had just had her third baby and their current home was now too small to house her growing family. But with the concession having been taken away by Labor, the family now found itself struggling to be able to upgrade to a larger house. As he told me this, I could see the emotion in his face.

The reintroduction of the stamp duty concession will save Queensland families up to \$7,000 on the price of their home. The Algester electorate had a vibrant property sector, but under Labor certainly in the last few years it has been doing it pretty tough. I believe this measure will go a long way to stimulating local activity. I was approached by many residents who told me that they have been holding off on purchasing or selling until the concession is reinstated.

Unlike the previous Labor government, we keep our promises made during elections. Unlike Labor, we do what we say we are going to do in government. We do not say one thing before an election and then change our minds after. We should not be surprised by what Labor does, as this would seem to be part of Labor DNA. We see it at the federal level. Do honourable members remember this quote? 'There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead.' Who said it? The Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, prior to the last federal election. What happened? The Prime Minister had to pay the piper. So what are struggling Queenslanders going to be slugged with as of 1 July? You guessed it—a carbon tax.

The former Queensland Labor government did nothing but support federal Labor in its push for a carbon tax. We do not support a carbon tax. Unfortunately, we as a government cannot stop it but we can

show Queenslanders exactly how much of their hard-earned dollars they are paying for federal Labor's new tax. As part of this bill, we will legislate that the cost of the carbon tax is to be clearly shown on consumers' electricity bills. This will give Queenslanders the opportunity to see the full impact of Labor's new tax on their electricity bills.

I said that we as a government could not stop the carbon tax, but what we are doing to reduce the cost of living for families is freezing the regulated standard residential retail electricity tariff, commonly called tariff 11, at 2011-12 prices for one year from 1 July. Queenslanders were told by former Labor Premier Peter Beattie that no Queenslander would pay more for electricity than they were paying when he privatised the electricity industry. We all know that Queenslanders have suffered huge increases in prices under Labor in government. I know by living in and being connected to my community that residents in Algester are hurting under Labor's higher electricity prices. I know that my neighbours in Logan are hurting. I know that our government's measures to freeze tariff 11 will reduce the cost of electricity for my residents, saving them on average \$120 a year.

We all know that small business plays a huge role in all of our electorates, particularly in relation to employing locals and reducing the unemployment queues. As part of the cost-of-living bill 2012, we will be lifting the payroll tax threshold from \$1 million to \$1.1 million from 1 July while retaining the current \$1 in \$4 rate of reduction. The amount at which the reduction reduces to zero will therefore increase from \$5 million to \$5.5 million.

We committed to provide relief to small businesses and we are delivering on that commitment. Increased charges and red tape had been making it harder to open, operate and be successful as a small business. Excessive red tape is holding back small business. The establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation is an important part of our commitment to cutting red tape by 20 per cent. We as a government are intent on and serious about tackling the cost-of-living issues affecting Queenslanders and building a four-pillar economy.

For the past 18 years, the Labor government decided how this state was run. The legacy that the former government has left us is a debt of \$62 billion this year, building to \$85 billion in 2014-15, and interest repayments of \$5 billion a year, \$100 million a week, \$600,000 an hour. This, honourable members, is the legacy that the Queensland Labor government left us, and one of the architects is the Leader of the Opposition. Yes, the Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table while decisions were made that drove the budget into more debt and more deficit. The Leader of the Opposition was at the table when the decision was made to sell the assets of Queenslanders without their consent. What was the excuse? To pay down the debt that they had run up, and even after the sale the debt rose. There was \$15 billion lost due to Labor's economic incompetence, with no much needed infrastructure built and no paying down the debt. This year alone we have to find \$2.8 billion just to balance the books. You could not run a business like Labor ran this state. Families do not run their household budgets like Labor ran this state. They know the value of every dollar.

In this bill we are delivering for Queenslanders. Unlike the previous government, we will manage the economy of this state. We will grow a four-pillar economy and we will get this state back on track. Under Labor, the litany of failures is just astonishing: \$412 million on a Health payroll system that does not work, \$600 million wasted on the failed Traveston Crossing Dam, the \$1.1 billion white elephant which is called the Tugun desalination plant and \$350 million on a dam with no connection to the water grid.

The cost of living for Queenslanders just skyrocketed under Labor. Household power bills increased on average by \$700 in the last five years. Car owners were slugged with increased rego costs. To register a six-cylinder car jumped from \$107.55 to \$443.45, making Queensland the most expensive state to own and operate a vehicle. The cost of a driver's licence doubled from \$73.70 to \$152.50. To add insult to injury, the former Premier Anna Bligh broke her election promise and introduced a 9.2c a litre fuel tax.

Members, we have to remember that, even if you wanted to get out of your car and catch public transport, Labor increased public transport fees by 35 per cent over 2010 and 2011 and another 15 per cent in January of this year—50 per cent increases in the last three years. I am proud to be a member of a government that cares for its constituents. We are acting on our election promise to help struggling Queensland families with the cost of living that Labor has saddled them with. I commend the bill to the House.