



Speech by


# Darren Grimwade

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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

 **Mr GRIMWADE** (Morayfield—LNP) (12.28 pm): I rise today to contribute to debate on the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I thank the member for Indooroopilly for his kind words, because he did visit me throughout the election campaign and spoke greatly with those in my electorate in relation to offering weekly discounts to regular commuters on our public transport system. I will touch on that a little later.

Today I am proud to be able to stand in this place and speak in favour of this bill and the importance of passing this legislation as quickly as possible to assist those families and small businesses in the Morayfield electorate who have suffered from the endless rising taxes, fees and charges of those who sit to my right. Throughout the election campaign, the cost of living was the singular issue about which the majority of my constituents spoke. It was their No. 1 issue. Those who followed my campaign would understand that I ran a very grassroots campaign and took the opportunity to speak to thousands—if not tens of thousands—of people around my electorate as I doorknocked. In the last 30 days of my campaign when I asked the question, 'If you had my job, what would you fight for? What would make the most difference to your family's life?', funnily enough, the answer I always received was to reduce the cost of living—to reduce things like motor vehicle registration, public transport fares, electricity costs and water costs. It was all about these large increases in expenses that people had to put up with for 10 years under the previous Labor government.

When we look at the record of wasteful spending by the previous government, we see that it is not hard to find out why we have the financial debacle that we have in this state and why the cost of living skyrocketed—on items such as vehicle registration, electricity, stamp duty, water bills, public transport fares, fuel and licensing. I could go on and on all day. The Labor government increased those taxes and revenues to pay for its wasteful spending of taxpayers' money.

I must remind the House that we on the government side of the chamber see taxpayers' money as taxpayers' money, not our own. Unfortunately, Labor sees it as its own to spend wastefully on whatever it sees fit. I will give some examples of that waste. I know that we have heard some of these examples in the chamber already, but I must touch on them. There was the \$600 million that was wasted on the failed Traveston Dam, the \$1.1 billion that was wasted on the Tugun desalination plant and, of course, the Health payroll debacle, which we found out this week will cost taxpayers \$1.2 billion.

**Mr Choat:** Absolutely disgraceful.

**Mr GRIMWADE:** I take that interjection. It is absolutely disgraceful. I have named just a few; I will not go through the list. I know that we have already heard about them during this debate. The previous Labor government had a bad track record of delivering dams without pipes and pipes without dams, nurses without pay and, as the member who sits in front of me stated, trains without seats. It was a government that did not have a clue. It was a government that even delivered to Queensland a fake Tahitian prince.

The previous Labor government, through reckless financial management and wasteful spending, has left this state's financial affairs in a mess, to the point at which our forecast debt is \$85 billion.

**A government member:** Shame!

**Mr GRIMWADE:** I take that interjection. Shame on them. What will that mean to the taxpayers of Queensland—the ordinary people here in Queensland? It will mean that they will be paying \$5 billion a year, or \$100 million a week, or \$600,000 every hour in interest to pay that back.

**A government member:** What is it every hour?

**Mr GRIMWADE:** It is \$600,000 every hour in interest alone to pay for Labor's debt. I say to the people in my electorate that \$600,000 every hour—\$100 million every week—could be and should be put back into building vital infrastructure. I represent an electorate that has the fastest growing urban population in Queensland. Many people are moving there. Infrastructure is critical. Health services are critical. The member for Pumicestone will know the dire straits that the Caboolture Hospital is in at the moment. These are areas of infrastructure that we must address. These areas need these funds in order to secure investment and opportunity and to secure the infrastructure that our people need.

I will take a minute to address the actions that the Newman government will take to ease the cost-of-living burden on families and small business owners alike through this bill. Firstly, the reintroduction of the stamp duty concession will save Queensland families up to \$7,000 on the price of their family home. That will help stimulate activity in our property sector—a sector in my electorate that I know firsthand is suffering. Throughout the election campaign I was joined by the then shadow Attorney-General, and we visited many real estate agents to ask them about the impact on their business of this increase of \$7,000 for the average person to buy a house. As I sat and talked to those business owners I was shocked to hear them tell me about its impact and about the downturn in my electorate. I was shocked to hear the everyday people that Labor claims to represent—the hardworking people in this sector—explain to me why this decision has killed the property market, has killed their sales and has killed their livelihoods. I must say that it was a humbling experience and it is something that I do not want to have to go through again.

Throughout that period I visited many real estate agents. I was told by one of them that it was that single decision, to levy the \$7,000 in stamp duty, that made the biggest difference to them. We also spoke in-depth—and I will touch on this issue very shortly—about the red tape that strangles business and that this bill will cut. In Morayfield there are many hardworking mums and dads, people on double incomes, people on low to medium incomes, tradies, pensioners, seniors and those with disabilities, and they are all doing it tough. Being slugged another \$7,000 to enter the property market was enough to push many in my electorate to the point at which they could no longer afford the Australian dream of owning a family home.

During my discussion with real estate agents, further frustrations were conveyed to me about the increased red tape and unnecessary regulation that was threatening to strangle their businesses. The main area of frustration was the requirement to complete the sustainability declaration—one more piece of red tape that was introduced by the previous Labor government. This bill will remove the requirement for the real estate industry to complete this declaration. That means less paperwork, less red tape and less confusion for those who are buying and selling their house.

The second aspect of this bill that I would like to talk about relates to electricity prices—again, an issue that impacts the Morayfield electorate greatly. Under the previous Labor government, over the past five years family power bills have risen by an average of about \$700 and water bills have increased by about \$200. The residents of the Morayfield electorate will benefit greatly from the Newman government's pledge to freeze electricity tariff 11, saving the average family around \$120 a year. I could give members literally hundreds of examples of the impact and the burden of increased electricity costs on the budgets of families in my electorate.

I wish to share one experience with members today. Whilst out doorknocking my electorate I approached a house in Morayfield. The door of that house was opened by a middle-aged lady who was stunned to see me standing there. She questioned why I was there to listen to her concerns. This was the first time in 20 years that she had had somebody running for election—someone who could represent her—at her door, listening to what she had to say. As I had done with all the residents I had doorknocked in my electorate, I introduced myself as the local candidate and began talking to her in relation to the upcoming state election. I asked her—as I had done with most of the people I had doorknocked—what her biggest concern was. This lady retrieved literally a fist full of overdue bills and debt collection notices. By that stage she was accompanied by her two youngest children, who had come to the door, like most children do, to see who this man was who was standing there.

**A government member:** The good-looking man.

**Mr GRIMWADE:** I will take that injection—the good-looking man. With her children gripping their mother's leg, this lady began to explain the pressures on her life associated with the increased cost of

living. She told me her story of having to go without to ensure that her children have food on the table each and every night. She told me her story about having to sit in darkness at night as the power had been cut off. She told me her story about the sleepless nights where she would consider taking her own life to end the pressures placed on herself to get up each day and make a difference for the sake of her children. This lady, who had been employed, had been laid off because the business she worked for had gone broke. It was a small business, a retail outlet, that had gone broke and she cited increased costs associated with doing business and cost-of-living pressures as the No. 1 reason—the same pressures that she was suffering in her life. This was a genuine lady who was suffering in the worst possible way due to the pressures of increased costs on her budget.

Unfortunately, this was not a one-off case. In fact, I had dozens and dozens of people tell me they were in the same situation. To witness this sort of impact across my local community inspired me to fight harder and ensure that this Newman government concentrated on cost-of-living reduction measures and policy associated with reducing the burden on family budgets and small business as a priority.

This bill also delivers on the commitment to provide relief to small businesses across the state, something I have a keen interest in and something that I have a great knowledge about. Unlike those on my right who want to stand here and drivel on in relation to small business and the impacts that small business owners are facing, I truly understand because I stand at the coalface of it every day and I know. I note that the Labor members on my right are finding my speech funny as I talk about the dire impact that the cost of living has on small businesses and that is probably because they have no idea. Those who know me understand that I am a fierce advocate of small business. I understand that small business in this state is the engine room of our community and adding further pressures in relation to cost increases and increased taxation on them only dampens their ability to grow and employ people. What small business does is employ millions of people. When they are cut down with increased taxation and costs they have no money. When they have no money they cannot afford to pay staff. I am trying to make this as easy as I can for those on my right. Payroll tax is a major hindrance and disincentive for small business to grow. This is a tax that businesses are forced to pay to employ staff. The more staff you employ, the more tax you pay. What an incentive for small business! Go out there and grow your small business and employ more people—which is what Labor claims to stand for—and we will hit you with more tax. What an incentive! We wonder why in Queensland small businesses are not wanting to grow and employ more people. This will unlock the shackles in this debate. The Newman government recognises this and this bill will combat this disincentive by increasing the payroll tax exemption from \$1 million to \$1.1 million in our first step to increasing the threshold to \$1.6 million over six years. This means that approximately 1,200 employers who would otherwise be forced to pay this crazy tax to employ people in the 2012-13 year will no longer be liable. Small business people have approached me and told me this is very welcome.

I know firsthand that excessive red tape and regulation is a major source of frustration for small businesses. It is that red tape that has a major impact on profitability and the lifestyle of the mum and dad small businesses around Queensland. The establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation is an important part of our commitment to cutting red tape by 20 per cent. Coupled with other cost-of-living announcements not contained in this bill such as freezing motor vehicle registrations—something that is very welcome from our side of the House as another form of cost-of-living relief to mums and dads who have a family vehicle—and, as I spoke about before, the reduction in public transport fares which will bring relief to hardworking residents in my electorate, these commitments tonight will be welcomed by my electorate, an electorate that made it quite clear to me throughout my election campaign, and still does, that the cost of living needs to be reduced.

It was my commitment to deliver as fast as I could cost-of-living relief. As I approached residents in the streets I told them, I told the papers and I told radio that I would passionately support cost-of-living relief to Queenslanders. I stand here tonight as part of a government that will deliver to those mums and dads, those family budgets, those who are doing it most tough in our community and those small business people. It is for this reason that I will be supporting the urgent passage of this bill through the parliament to provide much needed relief to local residents and small businesses alike in the Morayfield electorate. I commend this bill to the House.