




Speech by

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TREASURY (COST OF LIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (12.21 pm): I am happy to rise to speak on this bill today, the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. As I have sat and listened to speakers from across the chamber I perceive there are several elements missing from many of the speeches. I do not wish to deny that the last few years were rough for our government. However, very rarely have I heard acknowledgement of a global economic downturn the like of which we have never witnessed before, followed by the most disastrous floods in living memory which were followed by a massive cyclone. If that is the boom they believe we went bust in, it staggers me. Then there is the myth of the lack of infrastructure and the waste. Every time I drive the new gateway to the airport and cross the Gateway Bridge I am grateful for our Labor government.

Mr Watts: Up to Toowoomba?

Mrs SCOTT: The member opposite should have asked the federal government in the previous couple of terms. It gave no commitment and nothing.

Every time I take my aged mother and grandkids to Roma Street Parkland or South Bank, I am grateful for our Labor government—or to GoMA or when I hear of the new hospitals being built right up through our regions and down to the Gold Coast, where the magnificent Gold Coast teaching hospital is situated and light rail transit system has been built, or as I travelled west on Friday on the newly opened Ipswich Motorway. I am grateful for our Labor government when I use our busways, such as the Northern Busway, which has just been opened. Then there are the many world-class sporting facilities built by Labor. In fact, the ministers will be kept very busy for several years opening all of the infrastructure projects presently underway commissioned by Labor, all of which have kept workers in Queensland in jobs.

The members opposite have always ridiculed our Smart State policy, but a visit to the University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology or many other major centres of research such as the Queensland Institute of Medical Research will give them an idea of some of the great facilities and world-class research being conducted there. And, yes, Chuck Feeney made remarkable contributions to our research in Queensland, but our government made that one of our priorities and attracted many world-class scientists to Queensland.

I could keep listing major projects. However while we in Logan City have many things to be grateful for—such as our pedestrian bridge between our Mabel Park schools to ensure the safety of our students, our bus station which is being built at the moment, our metro sports centre or our three rugby union fields with fantastic clubhouse opened just a couple of weeks ago by the minister—it is in programs for the marginalised or those needing assistance, such as helping out families, jobs programs and so many support services, where we have truly shone. And then there are the advances in education and early childhood education.

As the member representing the Woodridge electorate, I do have in my electorate a high number of people on fixed low incomes, many on aged pensions, disability support and carers pensions, and also

those on unemployment benefits. However, with concessions offered, it is often those who work part time in low-paid jobs who find life even more difficult. So any assistance to relieve the cost of living is welcomed. However, recent reports of cuts to front-line staff in many important human services I find appalling. This will not only hurt those workers who have lost jobs and those who will in the future lose their jobs but will also put extreme pressure on those who remain and will reduce services to many vulnerable people.

While the reinstatement of transfer duty concessions for homes will assist some in the housing market and stimulate the industry, and increasing the payroll tax exemption threshold will hopefully provide some additional jobs, I wish to address the tariff 11 price freeze. During the past 12 months the Woodridge electorate has had a stark reminder of the huge task of keeping the lights on in the south-east. For weeks we had Energex trucks lined up along our roads, increasing the height of poles and adding additional powerlines. Prior to that we had an upgrade of our substation. This work cost several millions of dollars and is in answer to the large building developments in both residential and industrial estates. With large developments planned for Yarrabilba, Park Ridge and Flagstone, the Logan area is set for a huge increase in population. So the need for increased power generation and distribution is going to continue. We need to pay for those increases, so power will continue to be an issue, as it is in other states. I will be interested in future initiatives to bring down the cost of electricity to householders.

I would like to bring to the attention of the House an innovative manufacturing business in Logan, Kaon Electric, which has devised a fuse saver which has the ability to prevent up to 80 per cent of callouts in storms by ensuring continuity of supply. If the power is interrupted by a surge of power, as often is the case, it is immediately reconnected, often remaining intact. Only if it then disconnects a second time is a maintenance team required. In rural areas in particular and the outer metropolitan area, the fuse saver provides the ability for electricity companies to make significant savings in maintenance costs, not to mention cutting down on the exposure to dangerous conditions for the maintenance teams, who are often out in terrible weather restoring power. Innovation can play a major role in cutting down the cost of providing energy, and Kaon is a great example of that.

The freezing of tariff 11 will give temporary reprieve for some customers. However, many households, such as those with pools, electric hot-water systems and air conditioners, will find their power bills will increase due to being on other tariffs which are being increased and increased substantially. It is long-lasting solutions that need to be found. I note that this bill is being debated before the Queensland Competition Authority reports. We await that report.

Whilst this bill is not about the registration of vehicles, it would be remiss of me not to mention some of the calls that came to my office during the election campaign. The LNP TV ads during the election campaign were responsible for some of the residents in Logan coming to the conclusion that they would only have to pay the third-party insurance component of their registration. Puzzled, I took notice of the TV ad the next time I was in front of a TV and I believe there was a short pause in the voiceover whereby people could think they were being offered over \$300 in savings on their registration alone. There was a pause before a mention of electricity and possibly water.

Mr McArdle: Table your policy document and the cost-of-living component of that.

Mrs SCOTT: No, I am sorry. So it shows how easily people can be misinformed. And, of course, all those with utes and other work vehicles, as well as those with motorbikes, were left out of the equation. It now appears that, rather than a reduction in registration, drivers will find possibly a similar increase due to an increase in the third-party insurance component.

Our former government produced a booklet called *Every dollar counts* which I have handed out by the hundreds to my constituents. It is very popular. It outlines many of the rebates and subsidies available that I have found are not always known. The Labor government added several new subsidies for eligible residents, such as those on life support with oxygen concentrators or kidney dialysis, and also for those who require air conditioning for certain medical conditions. These were very real reductions in the cost of living to a very needy sector, and it is hoped that there will be no reduction in any items in this booklet.

I believe that many voters will be let down by the cost-of-living reductions they were promised prior to the election. Remember the directive from the LNP to Queenslanders to take their electricity bills with them to the ballot box? Despite high expectations, they may in fact find their costs in electricity and water will have increased. Now we find the government calling on local councils to carry the load for them. The councils have themselves just gone through an election. I am sure that if the councils could have they would have offered a reduction in water bills as an election commitment. The opposition will be monitoring this, with the now government having made such emphatic promises during the election campaign. While this bill may be a disappointment, I hear members say that this is but the beginning. We will be supporting this bill and awaiting the next chapter in cost relief as promised.