



Speech by  
**Gavin King**

**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

Hansard Tuesday, 19 June 2012

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

**Mr KING** (Cairns—LNP) (8.23 pm): What an honour it is to follow the cool, calm and collected delivery of the member for Mermaid Beach! If any electorate in Queensland is in desperate need of the relief that the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 will provide, it is Cairns. The unemployment rate across Far North Queensland is hovering at one of the state's highest at 9.1 per cent. Small businesses in particular are struggling to stay afloat, or are closing down. And so it is with strong conviction that I fully support the Treasurer's bill because it delivers on our pledge to reduce the financial burden on families and businesses in Cairns.

Those Labor members opposite are in denial about their woeful financial legacy. So I take this opportunity to remind them what advice our government received on the Sunday morning after the election on 24 March. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer sat down at a boardroom table in the government's Executive Building on George Street to receive a detailed briefing about the Queensland economy from senior Treasury officials. The Treasurer recalled in parliament that he turned to the very first page of the document he was handed, prepared for the incoming government by those independent Treasury officials. The Treasurer read the following sentence at the top of the first page—

Queensland's fiscal position and outlook is unsustainable and restoration is an urgent priority for this term of government.

Those are not our words. That is not political spin to shift blame. That was the fiscal position of our state as identified by independent Treasury officials.

**Mr Choat:** Appointed by Labor.

**Mr KING:** I take the interjection—appointed by Labor. I stand here bemused but not surprised that those Labor members opposite are still incapable—they are incapable—of accepting blame for the mess that they have left this state in. It is clear that Labor lost their way and, like characters in *Alice in Wonderland*, they have yet to resurface from their fall down the rabbit hole.

With apologies to Ronald Reagan, the former Labor government's view of the economy could be summed up in a few short phrases: 'If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving it, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidise it.' The Newman government on the other hand is determined to steer Queensland away from the path of financial oblivion and back on track to becoming this nation's economic powerhouse, a place where people want to live and invest, to start businesses and raise their families. It is my sincere belief that Cairns and Far North Queensland can and will play a leading role in achieving this exciting objective.

On the very first full day of normal business in this House, we took action to ease the cost-of-living pressures on Queensland families, and today I am proud to stand up in parliament to talk about the positive impacts that this bill will have on the people of Cairns and Far North Queensland. But first, to provide a contrast, I must make mention of the member for Mulgrave's attitude to the cost-of-living pressures on Far North Queensland families. It is a slight disappointment that the member for Mulgrave is not in the House at this time but—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Berry): Order! As I understand, you cannot refer in your speech to whether somebody is absent.

**Mr KING:** The Labor Party are on record as supporting the building of a \$240 million Cairns entertainment precinct. The Labor Party supported a \$240 million white elephant in Cairns, rivalling only the magnificent but thankfully scrapped ski jump in its ridiculousness. To prove just how delusional the Labor Party's attitude to the cost of living and the economy really is—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Member for Cairns.

**Mr KING:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The Labor Party's attitude to the cost of living can be summed up by what one of their members had to say in this House about this \$240 million monolith. In June 2010, at the height of the Cairns economy's pain, the Labor Party said that the proposed \$240 million cultural precinct could be big and grand enough to house a concert from the world's biggest band, U2. This was a 1,000-seat theatre but still the Labor Party insisted that it was a fantastic thing that could house U2. The Labor Party said in this House—

Maybe we will see headline Australian bands like AC/DC or international artists such as U2 or Pink ... hold a major concert in Cairns as well.

What was the very dry response from the Cairns Convention Centre manager to this claim by the Labor Party to their excuse and support for spending \$240 million? The owner of the convention centre said, 'It's quite obvious that U2 won't play at a 1,000-seat venue.'

**Mrs Frecklington:** That's common sense.

**Mr KING:** That is the type of twisted logic that those opposite once used to run this state, and still they use it in this House in their pitiful defence of their shameful record.

Despite the Labor Party's bizarre claims and support for this \$240 million white elephant, the former Labor government promised to fund one-third of the cost, supposedly and magically by selling the old Supreme Court site in Brisbane. With Cairns Regional Council expected to fund its own third of this \$240 million project, the fact is that this would have contributed to a minimum six per cent council rate rise—six per cent as a minimum at a time when the people of Cairns are struggling more than those in any other city in Queensland. But that is, of course, the Labor way. That is what the Labor Party offered up as economic salvation to the people of Cairns. It offered up a minimum six per cent rate rise for ratepayers in Cairns.

It is clear from what we saw on 24 March that the Labor Party failed to recognise the financial pressure that its failed attempt at government brought to so many families. Those of us on this side of the House see it differently. We know that families are hurting and businesses are struggling. We know that you cannot keep spending and spending while borrowing and borrowing just to pay wages and keep the lights on. We know that the measures in this bill will bring cost-of-living relief to the residents of Cairns and other areas of Queensland who have suffered for so long from endless rising taxes, fees, charges and regulation under the former Labor government.

The freeze on the domestic electricity supply tariff—tariff 11—will put a cap on soaring electricity bills for struggling families. The LNP will also deliver on our commitment to show the full impact of federal Labor's toxic carbon tax on people's electricity bills. The people of Queensland have a right to know exactly what the real cost of living will be as a result of this toxic tax.

This bill reinstates the transfer duty home concession, which will help families save up to \$7,000 on the cost of their home. This bill also gives Queenslanders a fair go by providing working families a hand up to bring their dreams of owning their own home closer. Homebuyers will also benefit from the scrapping of the cost burden and inconvenience of sustainability declarations. I am particularly keen to see the positive flow-on effect of this aspect of the legislation in terms of the struggling property sector in the Cairns region.

In terms of small business, this bill marks the beginning of our six-year plan to ease the burden of payroll tax, one of the biggest gripes that I received during the election campaign from small business owners. These measures will help 1,200 employers across Queensland in the first year alone. Thousands more employers will benefit in years to come, by the time we lift that exemption to \$1.6 million. This is particularly exciting and relevant to businesses in Far North Queensland. Small business owners have been on their knees for a number of years under the former Labor government, and this bill delivers on our commitment to reduce the cost to them of employing staff. During a visit to a Cairns paint shop during the election campaign, the Premier and I met with the owner, who said that our policy to reduce the burden of payroll tax would enable him to employ two extra staff members. This move to ease the burden of payroll tax provides tangible positive outcomes for the people of Cairns and all of Queensland.

Easing the cost of living for families is a key part of our commitment to bring much needed confidence back to the Cairns and Queensland economies. I commend the bill to the House.