



Speech by

Jason Costigan

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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TREASURY (COST OF LIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr COSTIGAN (Whitsunday—LNP) (11.15 am): May I start by stating the obvious: the measures in the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill will deliver cost-of-living relief to the good people of Whitsunday and, indeed, the people of Queensland. These are people who suffered terribly from endlessly rising taxes, fees and charges under the former Bligh Labor government—hardworking and decent people from all walks of life across the Whitsunday electorate, from Glenella to Glen Isla, Mount Pleasant to Mount Marlow and Blacks Beach to Dingo Beach. These are people who work on the jetty at Shute Harbour, at the resorts throughout the Whitsundays, in the cane fields of Narpi, Buthurra and Strathdickie, in the shopping centres of Mount Pleasant, Rural View and Cannonvale, in the mills at Farleigh and Proserpine and at many other places across the 6,000 square kilometres that I proudly represent as the first LNP member for Whitsunday.

Mr Rickuss: Good blue-collar conservatives.

Mr COSTIGAN: I take that interjection from the member for Lockyer. Many of these people work in small businesses.

This bill also delivers on the LNP government's commitment to cut the red-tape burden on small business. Yes, the old cane knife is coming out—the same cane knife that I referred to in my maiden speech to the House. It is coming out because the people of Whitsunday, like the other people of Queensland, have spoken and they have spoken loud and clear. After almost two decades of uninterrupted Labor rule in this state, the people have had enough. Hence, this government is getting on with the job of helping the people of Queensland, firstly by way of providing cost-of-living relief.

The Laborites love reminiscing about the light on the hill. But under Labor, for some people the light went out. Why did it go out? Because battlers—people the Labor Party always claimed to represent—have not been able to cope with the soaring cost of electricity. In fact, in the past five years under Labor the average Queensland family has seen about \$700 whacked onto their household power bills—something members opposite should be ashamed of. Why did the costs go up? The member for Whitsunday has his own theory: firstly, Labor just cannot count and, secondly, Labor loves taxes, charges and levies like Dracula loves the blood bank.

Labor's economic madness will see Queensland saddled with a debt of \$62 billion this year. That is getting close to \$1 billion of debt for every island that makes up the Whitsundays and it is a debt that will rise to a whopping \$85 billion in 2014-15. To put this debt into perspective, the interest alone on this debt is \$100 million every week—\$100 million every week thanks to economic mismanagement of the highest order. Just imagine what we could do with our much maligned Bruce Highway with that \$100 million every week, or how many overtaking lanes could we build in the north, or how much flood mitigation work could be done, or how we could get a ring-road around the rapidly growing city of Mackay, linking the harbour on the north side with the industrial powerhouse suburb of Paget on the city's south side. Just imagine what \$100 million a week could do in terms of building a new Mackay Base Hospital without selling off Mackay Airport to pay for it, or how we could build new and better facilities for our boaties in the Whitsundays in

places such as Cannonvale and Dingo Beach, or perhaps put a few extra dollars into Tourism Whitsundays, allowing them to keep open the now-defunct tourist information centre at Proserpine.

Let us not forget that the same Labor government of the past lost our AAA credit rating. Who was in that up to his eyeballs? The former member for Mount Coot-tha! He is no longer in this place, thankfully. He loved telling everybody and anybody that he loved the Whitsundays, he is from the Whitsundays, but sadly did stuff-all for the people of the Whitsundays except make their lives harder. Just ask the lady who owns and operates a clothing shop in the main street of Airlie Beach. She told me on the hustings last year—some time ago—that she had not paid herself a wage in more than 12 months. That is right, 12 months! What about the poor tradies in Cannonvale who now leave home well before dark every day and cover hundreds of kilometres every week commuting to and from their new place of work because the work has dried up locally? People right across my electorate are hurting: pensioners, families, tradies, mill workers, workers in the tourism industry—the list goes on and on. They need cost-of-living relief and they need it now, especially with Labor's carbon tax just around the corner.

The previous local member was not only the minister for tourism but also the minister for small business. In essence, she presided over a disaster. The people in my electorate are still counting the cost. That is despite the rivers of black gold that flow right around the electorate that I represent; rivers of black gold that should have ensured that Queensland would be in a robust financial state, not a sad one. Queenslanders everywhere are now hurting as a result of the situation.

Labor's sins go on and on and on. As we heard earlier, Queensland is now the most expensive state in which to own and operate a motor vehicle. In four years the cost of registering a six-cylinder car has ballooned by more than \$107 to \$443.45. Compare that to our commitment to freeze car rego in our first term of office. It was Labor that also ripped away what many of my constituents referred to as the fuel subsidy. It was Labor that ripped away the stamp duty concession on the family home. And it was Labor that ripped people off by ramping up the cost of power—after the former Premier famously once remarked that nobody would be worse off in relation to electricity reform. Deception indeed of the highest order. There they are, the party of five—or part thereof—that survived a kick up the backside by the people of Queensland. They were the signatories to all these aforementioned matters, and much, much more, impacting on the cost of living for Queenslanders. Did they speak up and say no to Premier Bligh? No. Did they speak up and say these laws would hurt everyday Queenslanders? No. They did not say anything at all. The new member for Rockhampton and the new member for South Brisbane were not part of the former government, but they were cheering all the way when Labor brought in these so-called reforms.

Mr Rickuss: They were some of the faceless men pulling the strings.

Mr COSTIGAN: I will take the interjection from the member for Lockyer who is in fine form in the House here today. I can hear the new member for Rockhampton standing in the streets of working class Park Avenue, a place I know well from my travels across regional Queensland, saying, 'Good work, Schwarto! Good work!' Ditto the new member for South Brisbane, who would have had the pompoms out for her predecessor, that same person who took Queensland towards financial oblivion at the same time that the taxpayer-funded salary of the Premier's husband could have passed for a prize in Gold Lotto.

On the issue of the fuel subsidy there are two members of the previous government who really should hang their heads in shame, they being the member for Mulgrave and the member for Mackay, because it is the people of North Queensland who particularly bore the brunt of that fuel tax, something that Queenslanders once happily lived without. There was a time when Queensland motorists were the envy of those from interstate. The people of the north, west and central Queensland—and regional communities especially—need their cars more than anywhere else.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr COSTIGAN: The member for Mulgrave wants to have a shot at us and that is fine. There is no need for protection at the moment. The member for Mulgrave should know that there is no commuter train running from Gordonvale into Cairns. Conversely, there is no rail link between Slade Point in the northern part of the electorate of Mackay linking the industrial suburb of Paget on the south side where many of the workers of Mackay earn a quid. In the case of the people of Whitsunday, the family car is vital for getting people to and from work, to specialist medical care in places such as Townsville, indeed Mackay, university, shopping, getting kids to and from school, especially in the northern beaches of Mackay where there is still no high school, hence the mums and dads on the morning run, Monday to Friday, and it has been going on for years and years and years. The family car is vital for getting people to local football, even to watch the Cowboys. Even the Cowboys have been affected by Labor's decision to do away with the fuel subsidy. People are not going to watch the Cowboys in Townsville like they used to. Let us not forget that the people were duded after the 2009 state election. Those opposite led the people of Queensland up the garden path.

This bill delivers on our pledge to lower the cost of living for Queenslanders, not just in Whitsunday, but everywhere—from Currumbin to Cook—right across this great state of ours, a state that has gone to the dogs thanks to 20 years of Labor's neglect, waste and voracious appetite for tax. Specifically, this bill will bring back the stamp duty concession on the family home. It will increase the payroll tax exemption threshold, a move that I know will be warmly received and welcomed by those operating businesses across my electorate, those hoping to grow their business, recruit more staff, et cetera.

This bill will also mean the freezing of tariff 11 electricity prices for one year, saving families on average around \$120. It will facilitate the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation, and it will remove the need for sustainability declarations. That is something that people such as Reg Gillen, a respected real estate agent in the town of Proserpine, will be smiling about. There is no doubt about that. As far as Mr Gillen is concerned, and his views are very much shared by people I talk to every day of the week when I am in my electorate, these declarations are a pain in the backside. I could use more colourful language, but I will not be doing that. A pain in the backside, Mr Gillen says, a pain bigger than the one he received when he got a tetanus needle up the you-know-where after falling off a horse out the back of Proserpine many, many moons ago. This bill will bring many benefits to the people of Whitsunday and Queensland. I commend the bill to the House so that we can start getting Queensland back on track.