




Speech by
Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Tuesday, 14 February 2012

MOTION: PRIVATE HEALTH INSURANCE REBATE

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.41 pm): I rise to second the motion that has been moved by the member for Caloundra and the shadow minister for health. I congratulate him on the contribution that he made in support of the motion that is now before the House for consideration. The member for Caloundra outlined the effect of the proposal that is before the federal parliament on the health system in Queensland. I want to concentrate in my contribution on the effect of that proposal on the cost of living for the people of Queensland.

When we go out into our electorates and speak to the people that we represent right across Queensland, if we are in tune with our electorates, we cannot miss the message. The message that I get in my electorate and in places right across Queensland is that people are struggling with the cost of living. They are struggling with an increasing financial burden. They are struggling with the continual challenge of making ends meet, especially people on fixed incomes, especially people who are dealing with increasing cost structures such as people with growing families where the cost of supporting those families inevitably grows.

The cost of living is a big issue for a great many Queenslanders. No member of parliament worth their salt can miss that message if they go out and talk to their electorate, because it is a consistent message and it is a consistent problem right across Queensland no matter where you go and no matter which community you represent. It is not an issue that has a silver bullet solution. It is not an issue that has one single cause. The cost-of-living increases that have been inflicted upon the people of Queensland by this Labor government over the last 20 years have stemmed from an attitudinal problem. It is a problem of attitude. It is an assumption that somehow all the little costs that the government imposes on people do not really matter. And so it is with the proposal that is the subject of the motion tonight.

This proposal is another little cost added on to the cost burden on families right across Queensland, as it was with the extra cost of water bills that was the direct result of the government's maladministration—only in that case no-one would describe that as a 'little' added cost. It was a significant added cost, as was the added cost that was imposed upon people in their electricity bills. Even though the Premier stood in this place and repeated a number of times that no Queenslander would be worse off under the electricity reforms, the government's electricity reforms have significantly added to the cost of living of every Queenslander. And so it goes on down the list of extra costs—a little bit added on to registration, a little bit added on to every tax and charge that the government could think of. It is slugging families when they go to buy their family home an extra \$7,000. And so it adds up to a point where the cost of living is now a burden on Queenslanders.

Queenslanders are beginning to understand that the biggest part of that additional burden is the result of this government's attitude, this government's lack of administrative capability, this government's lack of understanding. This government has failed to understand the impact of its own incompetence on the people that it represents. The fact is that the government's own incompetence has added to a cost burden on families that is now becoming impossible to bear. And so it is with the proposition that is before the federal parliament.

This is a proposition that I believe has its roots deep in Labor psychology—that somehow or other people who can afford private health insurance do not deserve a tax rebate for having paid their private health insurance, that somehow or other we can slug them and there will not be a consequence. As the member for Caloundra quite rightly pointed out, there will be a significant consequence. There will be a significant consequence to a whole range of Queenslanders who will find it harder to access public health services that will become the alternative for those people once they lose access to that tax rebate. Once they lose the incentive to look after themselves with private health insurance, there will be an extra burden on the public health system and everybody will suffer because of that.

So tonight is a chance for the Labor members in this parliament to stand up for their constituents, to heed the message that they are undoubtedly getting from their constituents just as everyone on this side of the House is getting that message. It is an opportunity for them to stand up and do something about the cost of living, to reverse that attitudinal problem that they have demonstrated over the last 20 years and to show that they care—that they care for Queenslanders and for the people they represent.

(Time expired)