




Speech by

Lisa France

MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

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TREASURY (COST OF LIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs FRANCE** (Pumicestone—LNP) (11.05 am): I am pleased today to rise to speak in support of the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. This bill shows that the state government is serious and will tackle the problem that is hurting Queenslanders—that is, the rising cost of living. Last week I spoke in this place about my experiences on the campaign trail and the message that the people of Pumicestone gave to me. While doorknocking through the electorate, the message was clear. At community meetings, the message was clear. At listening posts across the electorate, the message was clear. This message was always the same: ‘The cost of living is killing us!’ This bill will address many of the root problems associated with the rising cost of living that all Queenslanders face. Our government has not taken the easy way out.

This bill amends seven acts and gives effect to our key election promises to reduce red tape and assist families reduce their cost-of-living expenses. This legislation will amend the following: the Carers (Recognition) Act, the Duties Act, the Payroll Tax Act, the Electricity Act, the Queensland Competition Authority Act, the Building Act and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act. Just briefly, let us look at what these amendments will do. The amendment of the Carers (Recognition) Act will streamline the information included in agency annual reports; the amendment of the Duties Act will return the stamp duty concession for homebuyers who purchased a home to live in, a move that will put money back into the pockets of homebuyers; the amendment of the Payroll Tax Act will increase the payroll tax threshold, a move that will put money back into businesses; the amendments to the Electricity Act will, among other things, ensure that the minister has sufficient flexibility to set tariff 11 in accordance with the government’s decision to freeze tariff 11; the amendments to the Queensland Competition Authority Act will provide the authority with the legislative teeth to investigate and report on any matter relating to competition, industry or best practice regulation; and the amendments to the Building Act and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act will remove a piece of onerous paperwork that increased workload and administration costs on small business. This red tape was an unnecessary increase on the home seller.

Let us compare these amendments with Labor’s solution to solving the cost-of-living problems. In the 2011 budget the Labor government abolished a levy that was a previous Labor government imposition on Queenslanders, the ambulance levy; it provided a pensioner subsidy to lessen the impact of rising local government rates; it provided another pensioner subsidy to lessen the impact of rising water costs in South-East Queensland; it provided a discount for pensioners to assist with the rising costs of an urban fire levy; and another subsidy to assist those living in regional and rural Queensland with the rising cost of electricity. Can members see a trend here? The Labor government did not address the root of the problem and these subsidies, while welcomed in the homes of pensioners, did not assist the families or single working people who saw less and less of their take-home pays. Despite offering pensioners these bandaid solutions to Labor constantly rising the cost of living, I have yet to hear a pensioner say that increased costs of living are not affecting them. This is why Queenslanders voted so emphatically and in such unprecedented numbers to support a change in government.

My husband, Chad, and I together with my parents, Ann and Barry, have run a small business on Brbie Island since the nineties. We have seen and know firsthand the effects of poor government policy on businesses.

What Queenslanders have had to deal with week to week as they try to stretch their pays or pensions is the increased cost of basic food and services. In most cases these increases have been the result of poor government policy or the lack of restraint by government. I sometimes wonder at the ways that the Labor government, both state and federal, can find so many methods to tax their citizens. Both federal and state Labor seem to go out of their way to levy more charges and taxes, and when people complain they bring in a budget with subsidies and giveaways to placate them. What they should have done is what this government is doing with this bill. We are looking at the causes of the price rises and addressing the issue at its source rather than just adding another layer of government bureaucracy.

I return to this bill and how the amendments to each of the acts will impact on Queenslanders. The amendments to the Duties Act will reinstate the transfer duty home concession, the previous transfer duty rate structure and the previous phasing-out point of \$550,000 for reducing the rebate for the transfer duty first home concession for transactions entered into or after 1 July 2012. From the first day I opened my electorate office, people came in to ask me when the stamp duty concession for homeowners would be returned. Many thought that the election of the LNP government would automatically bring back this concession. I had to explain to them that legislation was needed and they urged me to remind the government that the reinstatement of the homeowners concession will really make a difference to them. I know that people have been holding off on purchasing their home. That is why the state government has moved quickly to make these changes. What Labor did not understand is that, by taking away the concession to those who wanted to purchase a home to live in, they increased the cost of purchasing a home and that slowed an already sluggish property market. This amendment will put money back into the budgets of many Queenslanders purchasing a home to live in. These amendments to the Duties Act are another LNP election promise kept.

The amendments to the Payroll Tax Act will increase the exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$1.1 million from 1 July 2012. The lifting of this exemption will make a real difference to businesses by lessening their costs. Fewer costs will ensure that, as confidence grows, businesses will be able to take advantage and take the steps to employ more staff or, indeed, might just ensure that the business keeps its present staffing levels. These amendments are in line with the LNP's Blueprint for Queensland Small Businesses and honours another election commitment.

The arrival of the electricity bill in the letterbox is not something that many of us look forward to. The rising cost of electricity has eaten into every household budget, to the budgets of small businesses and to the budgets of government. These costs all end up being passed on to the consumer. The amendments in this bill seek to provide the state government with another tool to help with these rising costs by giving the minister responsible for energy—Minister McArdle—the flexibility in setting tariff 11. This bill will also implement the government's commitments to require retailers to display the cost of Labor's carbon tax on household electricity bills from 1 July 2012.

The amendments to the Queensland Competition Authority Act will allow the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation with the Queensland Competition Authority. Under the direction of the minister, these amendments will allow the authority to investigate and report on any matter relating to competition, industry, productivity or best-practice regulation, to review and report on regulatory assessment statements and to review and report on existing legislation. Again, this is a practical support for Queensland's economy that will really make a difference.

Amendments to the Building Act and the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act will remove the need for sellers and real estate agents to provide sustainability declarations to potential buyers of residential properties.

A government member: Hear, hear!

Mrs FRANCE: I thank the member. The requirement to provide a sustainability declaration for each and every property for sale is a perfect example of Labor's green tape that achieves nothing other than an increased cost to the home seller and the killing of more trees through pointless paper printing. This regulation required a signature and display within the property for sale, but it did not actually require a person to tick all the boxes or fill in answers to all the questions. Abolishing this pointless document will provide a welcome cost saving to home sellers and will be one less pointless document clogging filing cabinets in real estate agencies.

It is only two months since the LNP government was swept into power through a resounding vote by the people of Queensland. Short-term fixes were not working and that is all the Labor Party could offer. Queenslanders had to try to balance their household budgets each week and they were finding it more and more difficult. From day one, this government has made the hard decision to ensure that the future is brighter for Queenslanders. The can-do government is providing Queenslanders with a way forward.

This legislation before the House today is why the LNP government will take Queensland forward and give confidence to businesses and confidence to families and singles alike. This government is doing what it promised by cutting red tape and getting Queensland back on track. I am proud to be part of a government that in fewer than two months has been able to table legislation that will help cut costs for all Queenslanders. I commend the bill to the House.