



Speech by

Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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TREASURY (COST OF LIVING) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr WATTS (Toowoomba North—LNP) (12.45 pm): I rise to speak in favour of the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill to amend the Building Act 1975, the Carers (Recognition) Act 2008, the Duties Act 2001, the Electricity Act 1994, the Payroll Tax Act 1971, the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act 2000 and the Queensland Competition Authority Act 1997. I have been listening to the debate. The member for Woodridge spoke about people in her electorate who are on pensions and the wonderful things that the previous Labor government had done. I would be interested to know what would happen if she went back to her electorate and told people on pensions and people on fixed incomes that, while she spoke, Queensland had to borrow \$140,000 to pay the debt that her government racked up. We are at the stage of borrowing money at \$10,000 a minute. Every minute, Queensland has to find \$10,000. Where does the Queensland government get its money from? It gets its money from the people of Queensland. This bill will try to bring some relief to the people of Queensland who are suffering under the burden of \$85 billion worth of debt.

Mrs Miller: No. They're suffering because you're going to throw them out of their housing department homes.

Mr WATTS: I will take the interjection regarding social housing. Social housing is in so much trouble because of the waste of the Labor government.

Mrs Miller interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member on my left.

Mrs Miller: We didn't send the letter out.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order.

Mrs Miller: People are crying because of the letter you sent.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bundamba will cease interjecting.

Mr WATTS: People certainly are crying about their public housing situation and the situation they find themselves in. All around Queensland people are crying about the situation they find themselves in, which is that we need \$10,000 a minute to meet the financial obligations that you racked up. That is right: you! The Labor Party racked up the debt and left us with rack and ruin. Now, after debt, destruction and incompetent management, it hands it over to us. And we will fix it.

We have a positive vision for Queensland. We have a vision for rebuilding Queensland. We will look to the four pillars of our economy and we will get Queensland back on track. I digress, so let me get back to the Treasury (Cost of Living) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill.

Let us have a look at the proposed reinstatement of the transfer duty concession that Labor took away. Imagine you are a nurse in a hospital and you excitedly find that you have been given a promotion and a transfer to another hospital. You have applied for the job and you are really excited about it. You are

going to have to relocate. So you go home and talk to the rest of your family about this great promotional opportunity and how your income is going to increase. You sit down and start doing the hard maths. Under Labor what would you find? You would find that you would have to pay an additional \$7,000 in tax to take the promotion.

A government member: Why?

Mr WATTS: That is what those opposite did. They took away the transfer duty concession for a person's private home. So police officers who got transferred and teachers who got transferred were affected. The people of Queensland who tried to better their lives by taking promotions and moving around were forced to suffer the burden of an additional \$7,000 in tax to buy a house every time they moved.

Mr Ruthenberg: Beating up the working families.

Mr WATTS: Beating up the working families. What did that do to the real estate market? Let us take my home town of Toowoomba as an example. I have spoken to a lot of real estate agents in my home town of Toowoomba and a lot of them are suffering very badly because—guess what?—people are not moving house. Why are they not moving house?

Does anybody here enjoy paying increased taxes? I do not see anybody indicating that they enjoy paying increased taxes. What did we find under Labor? We found that if we wanted to move house we had to pay increased taxes. It would cost an additional \$7,000. Guess what? So we do not move. What does that do to the Treasury of Queensland? We do not get the small amount of tax that we might have otherwise got. Why is the budget in deficit? Because those opposite only know how to waste money—\$85 billion worth; \$14 million a day. There it is. We have to borrow it to keep on going.

What did we get? We talked about some great infrastructure. You need to drive west my friends. The seven of you need to get in your Tarago and come west with me. I will drive you down the Warrego Highway and I will take you up the range crossing as it stands now. What you will find is that not much of that \$85 billion has been spent on the road between here and Toowoomba, I can assure you of that.

Mr Costigan: Or Mackay and Proserpine.

Mr WATTS: Yes, there are plenty of roads in regional Queensland that have suffered as you have racked up the debt on wonderful pieces of infrastructure—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! The member for Toowoomba North will address his comments through the chair.

Mr WATTS: As Labor went around racking up debt, what did we find? Infrastructure was not being built where it was needed—that is, in regional Queensland. Roads, ports or railway lines—things that would make us more productive and generate income—were not being built. What did we find? I do not know whether it is a tourist attraction or what it is off the coast, but is there anybody here from the coast who can tell me whether people are coming to study the desalination plant at Tugun? No-one is drinking any water out of it. Where does the water come from? It comes out of Hinze Dam. Who built that? That is right, that would have been before Labor's time. That was useful infrastructure that delivered water to the people of the coast. What do we see now? Some \$1.1 billion worth of infrastructure has created an interesting tourist attraction at best.

Let me keep going. One of the things that this bill talks about is the establishment of the Office of Best Practice Regulation. This is a key area for me. In my area we have a lot of industry. We have a lot of small businesses. We have a lot of businesses that would like to grow. Guess what? They do not like paying tax. What restricts them? When they get to a certain size they all of a sudden get hit with payroll tax.

Mr Ruthenberg: A disincentive.

Mr WATTS: A disincentive to employ; that is absolutely correct. I am sure if the Treasurer could do more he would. But with the situation we have inherited this is what we are offering small business. It will make a big difference. It will make a difference in ensuring that red tape is removed and regulation disappears. That combined with the changes to payroll tax and we will see small businesses start to grow and thrive again, I am sure. I commend the establishment of the office. I look forward to us taking away the red tape, the green tape and the unnecessary regulations that are strangling small business.

A government member interjected.

Mr WATTS: That is it, definitely. What else is there? The member for Woodridge spoke about people on fixed incomes and pensions. As I mentioned before, \$140,000 is borrowed to try to pay the interest on Labor's debt. These people she speaks of have faced average electricity price increases of \$700 over the last five years.

Members of the Labor Party are always talking about social justice and always talking about helping the working-class person. I ask them: do they think that a \$700 increase over five years for a basic necessity like electricity to run a pensioner's fridge or to keep them warm in winter is helping their cost of living? I think not. By freezing this tariff we will help pensioners meet their obligations to balance their

budgets. We understand that for people to balance their budgets we need to lower costs for people. We need to give them an opportunity to increase their wages.

I will explain it slowly for those who might not follow me. They can increase their wages by getting a promotion. That can happen only if, when they take the promotion, they do not have to pay an additional \$7,000 tax because they had to move house. They can balance their budget by saving money on electricity. That is what we are offering. We are offering the opportunity to save some money on electricity. Again, I am sure it would be more if we did not inherit \$85 billion worth of debt—\$10,000 worth of debt a minute.

I commend this bill to the House. As I have listened to this debate I have noticed that those in the Labor Party still do not get it. Queenslanders have entrusted the LNP to deliver on its commitments and have given us an overwhelming mandate to get this state back on track. We need to urgently address the cost-of-living pressures for everyday Queenslanders, and this bill will do just that. I congratulate the Treasurer on the bill and the people of Toowoomba will thank him for it.