




Speech By
Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Cost of Living; State Schools, Closures

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.22 am): Today I would like to talk about how the government has failed to reduce the cost of living for Queenslanders. As I travel across the state, people are telling me that they are very concerned that their water and electricity bills are increasing. As reported in the Australian *Financial Review* today, Mark Ludlow has very clearly pointed out that this state cabinet is grappling with how they can deal with the 21 per cent increase that is due for electricity bills in the near future. The cabinet has not been able to reach consensus on whether or not they will rebate Queenslanders in relation to this important issue.

What concerns me even more is the announcement last Friday by the Minister for Local Government, Community Resilience and Recovery. The Premier sent him out to test the waters on proposing a big new tax for families in this state. This government wants to raise some \$1 billion at a time when people can least afford it. When the minister came out and started talking about this big new tax for families, did the minister detail anything? Was there anything at all contained in his statement about what councils had actually put forward to him? Absolutely nothing. The Premier wants to have a conversation about this very issue with Queenslanders. If he wants a conversation we might need some facts. Some facts on the table might help Queenslanders work out whether or not they want to support this.

Today I say very clearly to the government that families are struggling. Families are finding it very tough. Their bills are going up. We now know that there will be an increase of 21 per cent for electricity bills. People cannot afford a big new tax on families at this particular point in time.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! There are too many interjections in the chamber.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The next issue that I would like to raise is the matter of school closures. These nine school closures throughout Queensland are hurting these communities. I had the privilege of going up to Toowoomba last week. I met the families concerned about the closure of Wyreema State School. There are three schools in the Toowoomba region that the government is seeking to close. Why is this government picking on Toowoomba? Not happy with that, I went to Stuart up in Townsville and I can tell members that the parents there are very concerned. They love their school. They love how their children are doing so well in their local school that this government wants to close down.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will resume her seat. The Leader of the Opposition is not taking interjections and I will start handing out warnings to those who continue to interject.

Ms PALASZCZUK: On Saturday I had the privilege of meeting the parents and students of Fortitude Valley State School. There are new buildings going up in Fortitude Valley.

Mr Sorensen interjected.

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

Ms PALASZCZUK: Families are moving in. Why is this government's prime concern real estate when its prime concern should be the community that lives in that region? Its prime concern should be the students and families who love that school and want it to remain open. My message to John Paul Langbroek is to start attending some of these community meetings and listen to the parents and students. They do not want their schools closed. We have seen no vision from this government for education in this state. What we have seen is purely the closure of nine schools. I note that the minister was recently in Mackay opening the Northern Beaches State High School commissioned under the Labor government. He is prepared to go up there and cut the ribbon but not to take responsibility for his actions throughout this state. The past Labor government opened 69 new schools throughout this state.

Government members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock. Member for Burleigh, you are on your last warning under 253A.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In conclusion, Queensland Labor will stand up for these communities. We will stand up to make sure that these school gates remain open. It was the Minister for Education when he was the Leader of the Opposition who said, 'We will keep the school gates open'. What this government is doing is closing schools across this state. It is an absolute and utter disgrace.