




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Electricity Prices

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.18 pm): Today our government released its response to the Queensland Productivity Commission electricity pricing inquiry. My government believes in supporting our most vulnerable Queenslanders, and that is why I am proud to inform the House of the decision to extend the electricity rebate to low-income households. Previously, low-income households have not received any energy bill assistance, with the rebate exclusively available for pensioners and seniors. My government recognises that it is often vulnerable families who need the most support. That is why we have decided to extend the electricity rebate to households that are eligible for a low-income healthcare card.

From 1 January 2017, low-income households and families will become eligible to receive around \$330 a year to help pay their energy bills. Thanks to this change, another 157,000 low-income Queensland households will receive direct assistance support to pay their electricity bills. This is important and very good news for families across our state.

We are also committed to continuing to support older Queenslanders. As I promised when the Productivity Commission's draft report came out in April, seniors and pensioners will continue to receive the full electricity rebate. The Treasurer, the Minister for Energy and the Minister for Employment had the opportunity to meet with pensioners this morning. They told us the importance of the concession on their electricity bills. Pensioners should not have to think twice before putting their fans on. The extension to the rebate will be fully funded.

I remind honourable members that it was the member for Clayfield as treasurer of this state who was prepared to allow pensioners to pay more for their electricity. It took Campbell Newman two days to show some compassion and overturn the member for Clayfield's decision. The government will provide additional funding starting at \$48 million per annum, or \$170 million out to 2019-20. The cost of the rebate will be met in the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review. The Treasurer will discuss the total costing of the electricity rebate in the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review next month.

I want to pay tribute to the Treasurer and the energy minister for their work on this response to the Queensland Productivity Commission report. This is another step in delivering price stability to electricity consumers. This follows the 43 per cent increase in power bills under the former LNP government. My government has already taken firm action to stabilise electricity prices. The government has issued a directive to distributors Energex and Ergon Energy not to challenge an Australian Energy Regulator decision on network revenues—a challenge that would have seen bills increase if it had been successful.

Due to this action, under the first two years of the government the average annual electricity price increase for households will be just 1.2 per cent. I remind honourable members that the government would not have been able to issue the directive if Energex and Ergon were sold, as the member for Clayfield had planned. We are determined to be a government for all Queenslanders working in their best interests.