




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Better Budgeting

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.08 am): I am pleased to report that the Palaszczuk government's \$25 million Better Budgeting plan is delivering for those who need it most. We know that currently 31 per cent of households in Australia are experiencing financial stress and that right now 14.8 per cent of Queenslanders are at risk of poverty. These householders want to get out of this situation but often do not know how or cannot access professional financial advice or products. Sadly, this often leads many households to access unscrupulous payday lenders, who deliberately target vulnerable Queenslanders. Thanks to our \$25 million Better Budgeting plan, we can tell struggling Queenslanders that they do not have to go down that track with hidden fees and high interest rates. We have an alternative. If people are struggling with paying their car registration, utility bills and insurance or need to replace appliances such as washing machines and dryers, they can now access no-interest loans at our Good Money stores and be put in touch with one of our financial counsellors.

While governing from the Gold Coast last week I met with Good Shepherd Microfinance at our Southport store and heard about the life-changing work it was doing. Already the store has had more than 500 inquiries in the first month and issued many no interest loans. Customers at this shop do not just get a loan and then leave; they are connected with a financial counsellor to help them address long-term issues and the debt cycle that they are trapped in, and that is where I met Brett. Brett came to Good Shepherd to help get his car on the road and pay his registration. During that application process it became clear that Brett had accessed a payday lender and had been charged illegal fees on top of huge interest rates. When staff looked into his finances even further, they helped him recover much of the illegal fees he was paying to these unscrupulous payday lenders and our Good Money employees advocated on his behalf. Renee, one of our employees, got Brett a no interest loan which got his car back on the road which helped him find work and he managed to get a refund from his payday lender who had charged, I have to say, outrageous fees. With the help of the financial counsellor, he got his finances back on track.

Once that particular payday lender was on the Good Money store's radar, they were then able to make contact with other clients who had been charged similar illegal fees. In Brett's case, most importantly, as I said, he got his car back on the road and got to job interviews. I am appalled that people like Brett are targeted by these predatory payday lenders and I am proud that Queenslanders now have another option to help them out with cost-of-living pressures and life's unexpected expenses and I am proud that the Labor government has practical plans and policies to help people who are living pay cheque to pay cheque.