




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Electricity Prices

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.32 am): Under those opposite, power bills are soaring and Queensland families are doing it tougher. They are getting higher and higher and higher under this government and there is little to no action from this Palaszczuk Labor government. Queenslanders are experiencing record high power prices even though we have an abundance of natural resources. Why is that? It is because the Palaszczuk Labor government is adding a secret tax to every Queensland power bill—a secret tax that it is adding to families and to businesses large and small throughout the state, a tax to underwrite this incompetent Treasurer's failure to properly manage the state's finances. Loading up the generators and power companies with Labor's debt has meant that it is passed on to consumers through higher power prices.

The LNP team has been out talking to Queensland businesses the length and breadth of this state. We have been talking to families about the rising and spiralling cost of power under Labor, and it is one harrowing story after another. The fact is you cannot create jobs while the economy is weighed down by Labor's 70 per cent increase in the wholesale price of power.

Only last week I was with the member for Mansfield at Mount Gravatt talking to a small business person, Matt Raymond, who runs his own business. He employs 15 people on two premises. Do members know what? He would love to employ some more young Queenslanders. He reckons he could put another two on if he had not suffered a 15 per cent increase in his power bill since the beginning of the year. He would be able to invest in the equipment that he needs in order to expand his business. He is using a 15-year-old Westinghouse gas stove that he would dearly love to be able to replace but he cannot because power prices are going up under this Labor government—a huge 70 per cent increase.

Labor's energy prices are a tax. They are a tax pure and simple and the LNP is not prepared to stand for it. While those opposite do nothing we are prepared to act, and that is why we will freeze executive bonuses at Queensland government energy businesses until electricity prices decrease because that is about giving families a fair go—a \$900,000 a year base salary and a \$100,000 bonus under this government, and those opposite do nothing about it! They preside over those particular arrangements. The message to executives is clear: lower power prices or your bonuses will be frozen.

We know it works because we did it after the Queensland Rail debacles that were experienced in 2010 and 2011. We all remember the on-time running going down below 90 per cent and then below 88 per cent and then below 86 per cent. We all remember it. While the member for Ashgrove was hiding out in the 'burbs—she resigned from her ministry and kowtowed with her tail between her legs back out to the electorate—we remember what was happening in the rail network in the south-east corner. We froze those bonuses and do members know what? On-time running was the best in the nation at 96 per cent. At the time we also halved the increases in Labor's public transport fare increases and we

effectively reduced prices for the first time in Queensland's history on public transport by five per cent by eliminating that much loved feature of Labor policy—a carbon tax! Where is their commitment on a carbon tax? What do those opposite say about that? We know 'mangocube3' wants one. We know the member for Mount Coot-tha—the soon to be 'I get lost on the way there' member for Murrumba—wants one.

An opposition member: Miles away!

Mr NICHOLLS: Miles and miles away. Those opposite want a carbon tax back in, but we will not stand for it. We also know the other thing they want is a 50 per cent renewable energy target. They want to take us the same way that South Australia went—the highest power prices in the Western world with unreliability.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: So unreliable, member for Brisbane Central, that BHP at its Olympic Dam site has to install its own power generating capacity because it cannot rely on the Labor government in South Australia to keep the lights on, to run industry and to support business. That is what the Labor Party in this state supports. It is saying that this crazy, headlong rush to renewables is the way to go when every experience is that it will lead to increased prices, more subsidies and less reliability.

A future LNP government will support a national renewable energy target of 23 per cent, not the 50 per cent that those opposite are proposing. How many times over the last two weeks have we heard the part-time Minister for Energy—the part-time Treasurer—say that the failure is in relation to a consistent policy? There is an opportunity for a consistent policy, and that is to adopt a national policy that has been signed off at 23 per cent—not to go to this headlong 50 per cent renewable target that Labor is proposing. Renewables do have a part to play in our energy landscape, but it needs to be the right balance at the right time with the right affordability—not just adding costs to families and businesses and damaging the reliability of the network.

Families can no longer face the pain of skyrocketing power prices. They need relief on their power bills. They want to know that there is a government that is concerned about their power bills. They want to know that there is a government that will take action, that will stop the rorts, stop the rip-offs and actually deliver lower power prices, and that government will be an LNP government.

They also know after almost three years that the Premier and her incompetent, scandal ridden and increasingly resigning ministry are unable to deliver it to them. While those opposite concentrate on themselves, while they deal with the crises that they bring on themselves, they are not delivering for Queenslanders. They are not delivering a coherent policy. They engage in a grab bag of spends and subsidies. Those opposite are failing to deliver on the outcomes that Queenslanders need. After almost three years in office their only legacy is to deliberately slug Queenslanders to pay for their financial incompetence.

Unlike those opposite, we will not just talk about these issues but our plans will actually be focussed on delivery. That is why on a number of issues we have made serious announcements about the action we will take. In August, we announced our plan to crack down on youth crime in North Queensland that has spiralled out of control under this soft-on-crime Labor government. Unlike Labor, which has done the complete opposite, the LNP will put the interests and safety of Queensland families ahead of young thugs.

In designing our policy, we listened to the community and received valuable feedback from police, prison officers, community stakeholders and community leaders. We believe that our policy strikes the correct balance in cracking down on youth crime but with an emphasis on personal responsibility. Our policy will ensure these young criminals are held to account and made to repay the community for their crimes through minimum mandatory periods of community service for offences such as unlawful entry, car theft and hooning.

Unfortunately for North Queensland residents, especially those living in Townsville, Labor's failed policies resulted in a revolving door of justice where young criminals run riot on the streets with impunity and no fear of repercussions. The LNP will introduce breach of bail as an offence for young offenders. Our hard-working police are sick of the times where they are sent out to arrest some young thug in the morning only to re-arrest them in the afternoon. We will remove the principle of detention as the last resort for repeat young offenders after their second offence and will give courts the ability to name and shame an offender. We will provide courts with the ability to restrict a young person's eligibility for a driver's licence if convicted of certain offences in dealing with motor vehicles.

The Labor government is not listening to North Queenslanders, but I can assure all regional and North Queenslanders that the LNP is listening. We believe in regional Queensland; it is in our DNA. We will always back North Queensland. The only party which can deliver better government is the LNP.