




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.40 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the committee's consideration of Auditor-General's report No. 9 for 2018-19 titled *Energy: 2017-18 results of financial audits*. I note that this report makes mention of the higher electricity costs for regional Queensland on page 4. On 26 March in this House, the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy said—

... I want to talk about how well regional Queensland is doing under the Palaszczuk Labor government when it comes to power prices.

This is totally misleading and totally untrue. Electricity is being used as a tax—an ever-increasing tax—on regional Queenslanders by the Palaszczuk Labor government. Regional businesses are struggling to keep up with electricity prices. I refer to the headline in the *Balonne Beacon* that states 'Power bills cripple town'. This is what a motel owner, Keith Bauer, said about his power bill: it hit him like 'a punch in the face'. Mr Bauer's power bill usually sits at around \$4,500 when near to full occupancy at the Riverland. This quarter the bill was \$6,200, and this was during the quietest months of January and February when he had 50 per cent occupancy. For 20 years Mr Bauer has been running the Riverland motel and his electricity bills have tripled. Mr Bauer is outraged by this Labor government, which thinks that regional Queensland is doing well when it comes to power prices. They are so out of touch and it is happening under their watch. Regional consumers are being taxed, taxed and taxed again through electricity, and the bills are tripling.

There is so much more that needs to be done. I wish to read to the parliament from another email that I received from another local business, White Industries of Dalby. They stated—

I am writing to you in regards to the current charges our electricity supplier is putting before us with our power pricing, as part of the Queensland Tariff Review.

In short the current pricing for all Queensland foundries will change from 1st July 2020.

The last 10 years we have seen our electricity pricing rise by around 100%. The current proposal will see our power bill go from \$650 000 per year to approximately \$1.2 million.

We have been accepted into Round 2 of the Large Customer Adjust Program run by the Department ... but fear it will only affect a small amount of this increase.

We currently employ 57 staff here but with an increase like this we don't know if we have a future.

How out of touch is this Palaszczuk Labor government? When a power bill goes from \$650,000 per year to approximately \$1.2 million, there is no way that regional Queensland is doing well. White Industries is a foundry and a good one. It is a major employer and manufacturer in Dalby.

Mr Power interjected.

Dr Lynham interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Member for Warrego, can you pause for a moment. Minister, I do not want to have to call you again or you will be warned. Member for Logan, you are now on a warning. You have not stopped cross-chamber chatter for the entire time. If I call your name again, it will be to ask you to leave the chamber.

Ms LEAHY: We heard this week that this Labor government supports the manufacturing industry. That is rubbish. It certainly does not support it in Dalby.

I want to make another point in relation to the Queensland division of the Australian Foundry Institute. They have tried making contact with the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy to discuss their concerns. To date, they have had no luck in organising a meeting with him. They cannot even get him to respond to their emails—not even a response to their emails. That is an appalling way to treat major employers and manufacturers in this state. They have been to the minister's electorate office because they have an urgent need for this meeting and they still cannot get a response.

When it comes to power prices, I can say that power prices and electricity are crippling regional businesses. This government is using electricity as a tax, a tax and a tax. Only the LNP is committed to driving down electricity prices for regional Queenslanders. Only the LNP will provide competition in the regional electricity markets so that those in the regions can enjoy what those in the south-east currently enjoy when it comes to competition and what it delivers in the regional electricity markets. The Palaszczuk Labor government is hell-bent on taxing regional businesses and regional residential customers, and we are paying through the nose for that tax through electricity.