




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2022

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Cost of Living

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.30 pm): We have to go back eight years to talk about the past because they have no plans right now. Let's have a look at what the member for Capalaba just said about TAFE and Queenslanders and the cost to young people. He conveniently forgets the Certificate 3 Guarantee which, I might add, exists still under this government, which would see people with a disability, 15- to 24-year-olds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders or the long-term unemployed subsidised for a certificate III qualification, not paying the rates that he liked to quote which were federally directed. The member for Capalaba likes to come in here with a revisionist history, but he ignores the facts.

Queensland families and Queensland businesses are drowning under a suffocating tsunami of increased costs. It is choking their hopes, it is choking their dreams and it is putting their very survival at risk. Queensland businesses, like the Mapleton IGA in the electorate of Nicklin, whose annual power bill has increased almost fourfold from \$58,000 a year to more than \$218,000 a year, will fold. As business owner Kelly Anderson stated, this exorbitant increase will cripple his business of 26 years, which is the only supermarket and service station supporting much of the western half of the electorate of Nicklin. Communities like Mapleton, Flaxton, Kenilworth and Montville all rely on Kelly's business, not to mention the many thousands of tourists who visit the Sunshine Coast Hinterland each week. The Mapleton IGA is far from a big business. It is the kind of business that sponsors the local schools, the local community groups and gives local kids a casual job, in a town where, I might add, there are not too many options. Businesses like the Mapleton IGA are the backbone of their community and right now they are hurting. Kelly's story is just one of many of businesses being crippled by increased electricity prices.

Electricity prices are a real and present danger to the viability of Queensland's small and family businesses. Regulated retail electricity prices have already increased significantly and they are expected to increase, according to the federal Labor minister, by another 56 per cent in the not-too-distant future. But those increases pale in comparison to the increases for bulk users like butchers, bakers and community supermarkets like the Mapleton IGA. At a time when businesses are facing cost pressures due to supply chain issues and chronic shortages of labour, the added impost of a massive electricity bill will push otherwise profitable businesses to the wall. What have we heard from the Palaszczuk Labor government? What have we heard from the Minister for Small Business or the member for Nicklin? Nothing! The state government had provided some financial rebates to ease the pressure on residential electricity consumers, which equates to about \$11 a week if we look at what they are saying, but what have they provided for businesses? Nothing! The CCIQ have called for the provision of electricity bill rebates for small businesses which covers the estimated impacts on Queensland's small businesses. What have we heard from the minister? We have heard nothing.

What about water? Businesses and households alike have been battling extortionate water prices for many years. It is a legacy of past flawed decisions by Labor governments, decisions like the Western Corridor Recycled Water Scheme which is sitting in 'care and maintenance'—absolutely useless—a decision made by those opposite. It makes one wonder what the effect of the government's latest thought bubbles will have on future electricity prices and water prices.

On this side, we have previously called on the state government to alter the price path for bulk water prices. The member for Capalaba seems to agree with that course of action. That would result in an immediate reduction in water bills for businesses in places like the Redlands, for retirees on the Sunshine Coast, and for families right across the south-east. However, the Palaszczuk Labor government have made it clear they are not willing to ease the burden of record high water prices by making that decision to alter the price path for bulk water prices. This is despite the former treasurer, the member for Mulgrave, suggesting that such a proposal had merit. Instead, what are we seeing? Residents right across the south-east paying higher water prices and they will continue to pay high water prices under this Labor state government.

It is not just small businesses, families and retirees paying more under this Labor state government; Queensland learner drivers are also getting a raw deal. This state government are gouging Queensland's learner drivers \$186 for their learner's licence which is the most in the entire country. In New South Wales, Victoria and the NT, it costs \$25. A driver's licence is a ticket to freedom, it is a pathway to independence, but, perhaps most importantly, it is essential for most jobs. This Labor government, through their actions, is making it harder for young Queenslanders to get a job, to be independent and to start their life on the right foot. Those opposite need to take real action on cost of living and stop ignoring the problem and living in the past.