




Speech By
Hon. Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2022

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Cost of Living

 **Hon. GJ BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water) (5.36 pm): The motion from the member for Toowoomba South tonight should be amended by this chamber because, as it stands at the moment, it is a lot of rubbish. The accusations we hear about the water prices from the member for Toowoomba South in his motion are misleading. They are baseless and wrong.

Mrs Frecklington interjected.

Mr BUTCHER: Let me deal with a few facts here tonight, particularly for the member for Nanango, seeing as though she is interjecting. South-East Queensland bulk water prices have increased around 2.2 per cent this year and will only go up 2.14 per cent in the next four years. This is one of the lowest increases ever since the establishment of Seqwater. That is a fact. The increase is also well below CPI, which is a fact. That is right, some of the lowest water increases since Seqwater's creation have been under the Palaszczuk Labor government here in Queensland because on this side of the House, we care about the living pressures of people in Queensland.

I have some more facts for you. Under the Newman government, bulk water prices increased on average a whopping 12.5 per cent per year while they were in government. That is right, the opposition sat around with Campbell Newman and his cabinet talking bulk water prices and increased them for the people of South-East Queensland by 12.5 per cent. There is a lot of them sitting over there now who sat at that cabinet table. The 12.5 per cent increase was well above the CPI water price increase under the LNP. Our record of 2.2 per cent is well below the CPI under the Palaszczuk Labor government. Why? Because on this side of the House we take cost-of-living pressures impacting Queensland families extremely seriously.

In addition to some of the lowest water price increases on record—and all the Nats over there should be listening to this—we are providing a \$55 discount as well to eligible customers on the South-East Queensland water grid. This was direct action by this government to reduce the cost-of-living pressures being felt by Queenslanders.

It is not just the bulk water prices that we are keeping low; the Palaszczuk Labor government has also invested \$50 million to slash—where are the Nationals over there—irrigation water bills across the state for 6,000 farmers supplied by Sunwater and Seqwater. That is right—discounted water by this government which is helping reduce the cost to our farmers. Sunwater and Seqwater irrigation prices have been reduced by 50 per cent for eligible horticulture growers, and by 15 per cent for all other irrigators for the last three years, including right now when they need it most.

The Palaszczuk government is serious about supporting Queenslanders with cost-of-living pressures and has several cost-of-living initiatives for Queenslanders doing it tough including pensioners. In my portfolio this includes the South-East Queensland pensioner water subsidy. Under

the subsidy eligible pensioners can receive up to \$120 off their water bills each year. It is a Labor government that is doing that. Labor created the pensioner water subsidy for those users. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will not be surprised and nor will any of us on this side: the LNP were desperate to cut it. If they thought taking candy from a baby was bad, it gets a lot worse than that when it comes to the LNP. They wanted to take money off pensioners. That is their track record. In Campbell Newman's 2014 budget the LNP tried to cut the pensioner water subsidy. I say shame on the LNP.

That is right; the LNP also wanted to cut the electricity rebate, cut the pensioner rates subsidy, cut the South-East Queensland pensioner water subsidy, cut the natural gas rebate and cut TransLink transport concessions. That is the record of those opposite. They should be ashamed of themselves. All we ever see from the opposition is cutting, sacking and selling. That is all they know. Speaking of selling, cutting pensioner rebates was not their only water policy. I have a copy of the WaterQ plan they put out—the LNP's nice, glossy water policy or, as I like to call it, a guide of what not to do. That document states—

... new regional bulk water storages will have to be developed by the private sector ...

These are not my words; they are the LNP's words. All they want to do is privatise. All they want to do is cut, sack and sell.