




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2022

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Cost of Living

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.10 pm): It is another example of the arrogance in this place when we cannot even debate a private members' motion. It just goes to show that something that stinks to high heaven cannot be the subject of a mature debate in this House. Cost-of-living pressures are real. We are lurching from crisis to crisis in health care and housing. I am glad the member raised it. He spoke about the federal government for five minutes and said nothing about what this government is doing to drive cost-of-living pressures through the roof. A recent survey showed that 76 per cent of working Australians said the cost of living was too high. This is right across the nation, so of course we have real issues. Many people do not have savings to fall back on anymore after all of the issues in the last couple of years, so it is a very big issue.

In many cases cost-of-living pressures are out of control in this country, but many that we should be dealing with are right here on display and we will be talking about them tonight. We cannot accept that fee and tax increases affecting the most vulnerable will be part of the normal regime of the state Labor government. As the cost of living skyrockets we are seeing the Palaszczuk government shift their focus. To try and deal with their increasing debt burden they are slugging us all with increases in registration. What I particularly what to talk about tonight is the 25 per cent increase in registration since they have had control of the government benches.

What stinks is that young Queenslanders are getting slugged when they want to get their driver's licence or learner's permit. These learner drivers are feeling the pinch as they are forced to pay up to four times the rate in other states for a minimum three-year licence. This is why this should be debated by the other side, that is why this issue should be acknowledged, and that is why we are calling on the government to show some empathy and dignity for these young Australians who just want a fair go.

This was recently brought to my attention by local advocate and mum Carmen McEneany. Her son Jack was thrilled to go off and get his driver's licence. We know that for young adults across the state it is a real milestone. For Jack, it would mean he has greater freedom and independence to move about the region; however, his elation was short-lived when he was slapped with a \$186 fee. Provisional, probationary and open licence drivers can all opt to pay for between one and five years, but learners have no choice. It is clear that this three-year learner licence fee is a blatant tax grab from the state government, which is trying to deal with ever-increasing debt and taxation problems. Make no mistake, we are taking money from the lowest income earners and the most vulnerable.

We all know that right now in these tough times every cent counts. Our school leavers are saving for uni, saving to move out of home and saving to start the next chapter in their lives, and we are asking these 16-year-olds—or their parents—for \$186. Queensland's learner drivers are getting a raw deal from this government. They are being charged the highest fees in the nation just to get their L-plates. In New South Wales and Victoria we know it is only \$26. It is simply unfair. I would like to thank Carmen and Jack for standing up for Queenslanders and taking up this fight. When the petition was lodged in

this House 800 local people in the Wide Bay region reached out within a couple of days. They were all outraged, and tonight we want the government to at least show these people some respect by having this debate. Carmen said she was shocked when she learned of the fee but there was nothing she could do about it. She could not even debate it, and the letters she received back from the minister were dismissive and rude.

The Palaszczuk government's poor budget management has a big impact on the cost-of-living crisis in Queensland, but let's not slug our learner drivers. I am calling on the minister to show a bit of compassion and reduce licence fees so that our young Queenslanders can get on with the job. There are many examples of Labor's failures and lurching from one crisis to another, including the cost of living, electricity, water, red tape et cetera. I do not have enough time in five minutes to name them all. One thing I do want to put on the record is the new tax on health patients. During the last sitting week we heard that the new payroll tax on health professionals will raise only \$20 million, but it is causing the local GPs in my area to cease bulk-billing. Can you imagine the effect on those most vulnerable? We have received advice from the local GPs in my area that they are now sending out letters to their patients advising that they now have to pay up to \$80 more.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BENNETT: We know that declining health is going to be an issue. We do not have time to talk about the health crisis here tonight and what pressure that is going to put on them. While we are talking about the government's lack of compassion, the other thing I really wanted to get on the record here tonight is the cancellation of the Driver Reviver program coming up to Christmas. I cannot believe that, when we talk about a crisis, somebody would consider that to be acceptable, particularly coming into December. Let's show dignity to our motorists on the road. Let's get our rego back under control. Let's give our learners a dignified way of getting on with getting their licence instead of taxing the most vulnerable people in the state like this Labor government does.