




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Ministerial Staff; Unitywater, Trade Waste Permit Fees

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (2.06 pm): At a time of record cost-of-living hikes, our red carpet Premier has another cost blowout in her government's ministerial staffing budget. Official government workforce data shows there are 12 fewer police on the frontline beat under the Palaszczuk government compared to two years ago, but the Premier has no trouble recruiting ministerial staff, who are paid a lot more than the average police officer.

The Premier has a reported 30-plus media spin doctors and communications people working in her government team, yet we have seen a blowout in the last six months of eight per cent—over \$1 million up from the previous six months—with ministerial expenses going up from \$16.278 million to \$17.649 compared to the six-month period in 2021.

Ironically, the government's excuse is that it needed more money spent on ministerial staff due to—I kid you not—additional governance rules in order to ensure transparency. Where? We had a motion in the parliament last night calling for the government to release the figures and the business case for the Gabba, which has blown out from \$1 billion to \$2.7 billion, but, no, the government voted against that motion. They are not 'letting the sunshine in', as Coaldrake called for; they are spinning a web of arrogant obstruction to stop the truth being released.

I want to talk about another important matter. In the midst of soaring cost-of-living pressures, Unitywater is slugging small and other businesses with a 750 per cent increase in trade waste permit fees. Mum-and-dad businesses are warning that they have to cut staff and some may not survive. Others do not know how they will cope, with some businesses finding their fees going up from \$350 to \$3,415 per year. I know of one business that is getting a bill for an extra \$20,000. This will hit fish and chip shops, restaurants and non-food businesses such as car washes, laundromats, mechanics and workshops—the list goes on.

People want to be and are passionate about being environmentally compliant, but what about a fair go and engaging with businesses before you ring them up and say, 'By the way, you're getting a bill for an extra \$3,000, \$4,000, \$6,000 or \$20,000'? It will cost jobs, and that is what these businesses have said to me. After the impact of COVID, you would think they would take care to be transparent and explain what they are doing. Do not whack people with these unsustainable price hikes; work with them. I talked to restaurant owner Tony Kelly, who employs 400 staff. He said that they got a random call last Friday to explain that there would be a price hike for services.