




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (6.03 pm): As a member of the Cost of Living and Economics Committee, I rise to make my contribution to the cheaper power bill. As already outlined by my colleagues, the shadow Treasurer and the shadow minister for energy and cost of living, this was very straightforward. We will not be opposing this bill. I would remind government members of the committee that we did not include a statement of reservation in the report. As committee members, we tried to achieve an understanding of how this cost-of-living rebate was going to be allocated to small businesses. Many, particularly in my electorate of Whitsundays, are dealing with hikes of several hundred per cent. Anyone who operates a large freezer service or is a high user of power has seen astronomical blowouts in their costs. Whilst we note there has been a contribution back to small business and households, there is a large discrepancy that many committee members questioned.

I want to draw the attention of the Minister for Energy to a major issue that I have written to him about and asked questions on notice. When we see the government provide cost-of-living relief by way of an electricity rebate, it is pertinent to note that we do not have reliable electricity in North Queensland. The government can talk up their investment in state assets, but we know it is a failure because the Callide Power Station has now been offline for almost three years. In one of my rural communities, Midge Point, we have had 14 unplanned outages since Christmas, including Christmas Day and Easter. During this cost-of-living crisis how is it acceptable to the government that on 29 December, in the hottest part of summer, parts of my community lost power for up to three hours? That happened consistently over several days in the peak holiday season. There is a lack of maintenance and reliability being experienced in the energy framework across Airlie Beach, which is a major tourism centre. We have seen outages for several hours that are disrupting not just the tourism experience but also the everyday living experience. This amount of funding means nothing and is a smack in the face to those people who have to throw out valuable groceries and produce because this government cannot deliver a reliable power service to parts of regional and rural Queensland, including Midge Point, Calen, Bloomsbury, Airlie Beach and Proserpine.

Coalminers who live in my community go to work to mine those very wealthy royalties back into state coffers, yet we do not see that level of investment into energy infrastructure assets and reliability of power. Needless to say, we also do not see any competition in Far North Queensland. We sit here and debate power prices, but in Far North Queensland we have one retail provider, Ergon Energy, that at this point in time is perplexed at the lack of investment they have seen in maintenance by this government. The government can go out and spruik this in their retail politics style, but Queenslanders know this is just a short-term sugar hit that is not going to the root cause of the issue. When we look at cheaper power, the government has everything centred on the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Project that the member for Mackay proudly touts in our community. This project has been rejected by the mayor of Mackay, the council of Mackay and the Yuwi people, the traditional owners, and the government has not been able to demonstrate how it will deliver cheaper power not just to residents of Mackay and the Whitsundays but to any resident in Queensland without any business case, without any costing and without any return on investment.

Once again this is cheap politics from a Labor government that is out of ideas and desperate to get a sugar hit to the voters of Queensland. Their Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan is flawed because of a lack of planning and a lack of consultation with the community. When the employees of Queensland Hydro are leaving in droves it should send the clear message to Minister de Brenni that there is no confidence in that project across the Mackay community. The opposition will not be opposing the bill because we know that hardworking Queenslanders deserve every opportunity to reduce power bills and put more money back into their own hip pockets to spend on the necessities they are struggling to afford right now. That is only as a result of this failing Labor government.