




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (9.26 pm): I rise to contribute to the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill 2024. The bill provides that the Treasurer is authorised to pay an additional appropriation in the amount of \$2.2 billion from the Consolidated Fund. We heard in the media that the Treasurer said, 'If we have to borrow to deliver our cost-of-living measures, then that's what we'll do.' There you have it—cost-of-living relief from this Labor government is now on the credit card, and it will cost a lot more than \$2.2 billion because of the interest that will be accrued on this credit card. Labor is using the credit card to try to address their political problems.

This appropriation bill provides \$1,000 to be automatically credited to customer bills from 1 July 2024. That is nearly double last year's rebate. A \$325 credit for small business customers will continue, and I will come to that later. The LNP supports measures that provide cost-of-living relief for Queenslanders, but this is a bandaid solution to the cost-of-living crisis created and brought about by this tired, third-term Labor government. The LNP condemns the Labor government for their complete inability to properly maintain our state owned power assets which has made these rebates necessary.

Why did this government have to bring in this bill? It is because, under Labor, Queenslanders are experiencing the highest electricity price rises in the nation. Cost-of-living increases are out of control under this Labor government. In 2023, retail electricity prices in Queensland rose 19 per cent—the highest in the nation, three times the national average. Why did this happen? One of the reasons is that this Labor government have failed to bring Callide C back online. There is not a better example of Queenslanders paying for Labor's failures than Labor's Callide catastrophe, which has unfolded under Premier Steven Miles' watch.

This week marks three years since the explosion occurred at Callide Power Station on 25 May 2021, yet Labor is still ducking and weaving from telling Queenslanders the truth. Thank goodness no-one was hurt on that site at that time. Whistleblowers have told the LNP opposition the chronic maintenance underfunding by the state government certainly contributed extensively to this explosion. Queenslanders deserve to know what went horribly wrong back in May 2021 at this power plant—

Dr Rowan interjected.

Ms LEAHY: I take the interjection from the member of Moggill, there is certainly a lack of accountability from this Labor state government. Queenslanders were promised an independent report by industry expert, Dr Sean Brady, into what happened. However, the energy minister is refusing to release this independent report and to tell Queenslanders the truth about what really happened. There really is a lack of accountability. It is so important to Queensland families because we know that Callide being out of service has reduced the available electricity supply and pushed up the electricity bills of Queensland families and businesses. It is in black and white from both the Auditor-General and the Queensland Competition Authority. In fact, the Federal Court had to order a fresh investigation into the explosion at Callide C, and that is a stunning indictment on the Labor government's culture of secrecy and cover-up. There is also action being taken by the Australian Energy Regulator alleging failures of the Labor government to comply with the performance standards of the Callide C Power Station.

When it comes to cost-of-living increases, this Labor government have a terrible, an absolutely shocking track record. Under Labor, Queenslanders are facing the steepest cost-of-living pressures in the country and it is harder than ever for families in Queensland to make ends meet. In 2023, Queensland copped huge living increases with: a 19 per cent increase in electricity, the highest in the nation; a six per cent increase in health costs, the highest in the nation; a four per cent increase in transport costs, the highest in the nation; an eight per cent increase in rent costs; and an 18 per cent increase in insurance costs. When we speak of that increase in insurance costs, that 18 per cent is particularly conservative.

I spoke to Anna on the weekend. She is a business owner in Charleville. Last year the insurance policy for her business cost her \$25,000 per annum—\$25,000 a year for one small business. This year, her insurance rose to \$35,000 in just 12 months. That is a 30 per cent increase. She could only get two quotes. She could barely get insurance at all on her small business. That sort of increase is something that no small business can sustain. Anna is looking down the barrel of having no insurance for her business. The \$325 credit on her electricity account falls well short of the \$10,000 insurance increase she is facing.

What is clear with this bill is that the Labor government's complete inability to properly maintain our state owned power assets has made these rebates necessary. For that reason, Queenslanders need to show Labor the door in 2024.