




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

MOTION

Cost of Living, Select Committee

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (5.33 pm): I rise to speak in support of the member for Nanango's motion and to speak on behalf of Queenslanders who live in rural and regional Queensland. I certainly lend my support to this cost-of-living select committee that we are calling for here tonight. The arrogance of those opposite is on full display here tonight. If one listens to their contributions they are digging a hole for themselves and they would somehow have us believe that this cost-of-living crisis is not as bad as it is being made out. I can assure members that those on this side of the House are talking to Queenslanders the length and breadth of this state and it is real. This is driving this state into the ground at the moment. I see evidence of that every single day: skyrocketing prices, the rent increases, the fuel increases, the insurance increases, groceries, power prices, water—it is across the board in this state. The further one travels from Brisbane the worse it gets.

Two weeks ago the member for Nanango and I met with some canefarmers in the Burdekin to discuss power and water prices. We got a shock to find out what is happening in that space. Can members believe that in 18 months power prices have gone up 52 per cent for those farmers? It has become so bad in the Burdekin that they are going out and buying diesel pumps. They have given up on electric pumps because they can no longer afford to run them to pump their irrigation water. That is on top of fuel cost increases, fertiliser cost increases and all those other costs. The farmers who feed this state are struggling to keep their head above water.

Do members know how galling it is for my constituents, my farmers, the business owners who are out there trying to make ends meet, to hear about these multibillion dollar profits that these grocery chains are making? It is price gouging at its worst. Let me give an example: rockmelons that farmers in my area are receiving \$2 for are being sold for \$7; and tomatoes that they are receiving \$1.50 for are appearing on the shelves for \$6 to \$12. This year we have farmers who are ploughing their crops back into the ground. They are running at a loss to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars. That is the reality of what is going on in the agriculture sector and how that is biting. Those primary producers are facing red and green tape, increased labour costs, power price increases and it is 10 years since they have received an increase for their produce.

Let me turn to insurance costs. The member for Currumbin talked about this. I can guarantee, member for Redlands—it is a shame she is not here—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member, there is a convention that we do not comment on the presence or absence of another member.

Mr LAST: I can assure this House that youth crime is having a massive impact on insurance premiums in the north. If members do not believe me, they should go upstairs and talk to Bree James and Yolonde Entsch. They will tell them. My insurance premiums have gone up 30 to 40 per cent—house insurance, car insurance. Insurance companies are bailing out of the north because it is ground

zero, crime is so out of control up there, and the flow-on effects with insurance premiums are having such an impact that people now are making a conscious decision not to insure their homes or vehicles because they cannot afford it. This is the reality of what is going on in the north of the state. As I said before, it is real and it is magnified when you live in rural and regional Queensland.

There have been double-digit increases in the cost of fuel. Think about the impact of that when those truckies have to put 1,000 litres of diesel into their truck. Someone has to pay for that. It is Queenslanders who are paying for that as added costs. Energy Queensland's 2022-23 annual report showed more than 50 per cent of customers were concerned they would not be able to pay their power bill. Is it any wonder when we are looking at 28 per cent increases in the cost of power! The bottom line here is that Queensland families need help and they are demanding answers, whether they live in the south-east, rural or regional Queensland. The member for Nanango's motion will help provide those answers. I want to assure everybody in this place that those on this side of the House will continue to stand up for rural and regional Queensland when it comes to the cost-of-living crisis.