




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2024

CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (10.13 pm): I rise to contribute to the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill. If ever we wanted an example of 'fly by the seat of your pants' policy, then we need look no further than this \$1,000 rebate announced by this government. We talk about giving with one hand but there is plenty of take with the other. We know that a 20 per cent increase in power prices over the last 12 months will be gobbled up pretty quickly with this \$1,000 rebate. We have heard a lot from those opposite tonight about the cost-of-living crisis. I say to those opposite: if they want to know what the cost-of-living crisis is and how it is really biting then get out of Brisbane and come to the bush. Come out to regional and rural Queensland and see what the cost-of-living crisis is doing in those areas. We talk about fuel, insurance costs and grocery prices. Come and drive on the roads out there and see what it does to vehicles and see what people are putting up with. What we could have done with \$2.2 billion across this state.

Mr Dick: Well, we could have.

Mr LAST: I am pleased the minister made that comment, because the minister was with me in Mount Isa two weeks ago at a critical minerals conference. He was there and he heard from the miners who presented at that conference. What were the two big issues facing those miners? They were water and energy costs. They are trying to get their mines up and going.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Members for Whitsunday and Thuringowa, cease your quarrelling across the chamber.

Mr LAST: They are trying to get some production going, but energy costs are stymieing that development. The Treasurer is quick to put his hand out to get his hands on those progressive coal royalties. The Treasurer is not so keen to put some of that money back into the areas generating that wealth. I have often stood in this place and said, 'Give some of the royalties back to the bush where it is generated.' They are not so keen to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Harper interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Apologies, member. Please resume your seat. Member for Thuringowa, you are warned.

Mr LAST: It is not too much to ask for some of the royalties to be invested in the areas that are generating the wealth. If they want to continue taking those royalties from the mining sector, then put some money back into the mining sector to allow these miners to develop their projects because they have dreams and aspirations. We heard at the conference how they want to get these mines up and running, create jobs and develop the west, but they are being held back because of issues such as energy prices.

Members opposite talk about power prices coming down, but I do not know anyone whose power bill has come down. In fact, it has gone the opposite way. When I have farmers coming in and telling me that they are going back to diesel pumps because they cannot afford to run electric pumps, we have a fundamental a problem in this state.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr LAST: I take that interjection. It is not good for the environment. Those opposite talk about emissions, net zero and offsets. If farmers are buying diesel pumps then it is there in black and white, isn't it, what power prices are doing in this state. They have power bills in the tens of thousands of dollars—not just the thousands but the tens of thousands of dollars. We wonder why our grocery prices are going through the roof.

We come back to that age-old question: where is our baseload power in this state coming from in the future? When Callide Power Station has been operating at reduced capacity for three years, is it any wonder that our power prices are going up year on year? They do not want to admit to that.

Mr Walker: What is your policy?

Mr LAST: Our policy is pretty simple: to provide affordable power and energy to Queensland.

Mr Dick: Our policy is Labor for Burdekin.

Mr LAST: I welcome that fight every day of the week.

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members, we are almost at the end of a very long day. I know there is a lot of passion in this debate, but I ask that we take it down.

Mr LAST: I would like to remind the Treasurer that by far the greatest percentage of royalties in this state come from my electorate—the mighty Burdekin electorate.

Ms Camm interjected.

Mr Purdie interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Whitsunday and member for Ninderry, you both are warned under the standing orders. Member for Ninderry, I remind you that you need to be in your own seat if you want to participate in the debate.

Mr LAST: It would not be so bad if we did not constantly have power outages. Certainly, in the area where I live just south of Townsville, around Cungulla and Alligator Creek, I know of the constant power outages.

Ms Camm interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Whitsunday, you are under a warning. You can leave the chamber.

Whereupon the honourable member for Whitsunday withdrew from the chamber at 10.18 pm.

Ms Richards interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Redlands, I do not need your assistance. You are warned as well.

Mr Whiting interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Bancroft, if you think it is a joke, you can join her as well.

Mr LAST: It is a bitter pill to swallow when those opposite talk about energy supply in Queensland, yet we have these constant disruptions, constant outages and constant maintenance issues in areas south of Townsville. Those residents are in despair. Those business owners are in despair because it is costing them money. Is it too much to ask that, if they are paying these exorbitant power prices, they should have a reliable power supply? All they want is a reliable power supply, which is something that we take for granted here. I can assure the House that in a lot of places in Queensland that is not the case. It is a big state. We hear that statement often in this place. I often like to say that just because you live in the bush should not mean that you put up with substandard services. I am going to continue advocating for those services while ever I am in this place.

There is no better example of that than the announcement today that again we are losing the doctor from Clermont. Clermont Country Practice is closing its doors. It took us five years to get a permanent doctor in that community—five long years of battling and here we go again. We are back on that bandwagon. Wouldn't it be nice if we were putting some of this money into providing basic medical services in communities such as Clermont and providing teachers at Dysart, Moranbah and Middlemount? Wouldn't that be nice? I am going to continue fighting for that equality in education, in health, for our roads and for our telecommunications out there which are absolutely disgraceful. Those people who live in the bush deserve the same as those in the city.

Debate, on motion of Mr Last, adjourned.