




Speech By
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CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)

 **Mr JANETZKI** (Toowoomba South—LNP) (5.03 pm): On 2 May the Treasurer introduced the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill 2024. The bill was referred to the Cost of Living and Economics Committee for consideration. The bill provides that the Treasurer is authorised to pay an additional appropriation in the amount of \$2.267 billion from the Consolidated Fund. This appropriation provides \$1,000 to be automatically credited to customer bills from 1 July 2024. A \$325 credit for small business customer bills will continue. Despite the six-day submission window, the bill received four submissions. The committee recommended that the bill be passed. I confirm that the opposition will be supporting the bill.

Queenslanders are struggling through the worst cost-of-living crisis in living memory. This bill is necessary because Queenslanders have been let down by a decade-old government that has failed to plan, has failed to think beyond their own political prism and is now simply just failing. Instead of a systematic, considered, evidence-based approach to delivering better government through structural cost-of-living solutions and relief, all Queenslanders are seeing from that side of the House is retirements and rebellion from their members of parliament as they do not believe that their government has any long-term solutions to address the cost of living in Queensland.

How can Queenslanders trust that the Palaszczuk-Miles-Dick government has any long-term solutions for the cost-of-living crisis after 10 long years of failure? You see it as they all walk away. First, Annastacia Palaszczuk left. As Kate Jones lines up for a Senate race, we are starting to see what was going on there. It is not just the former premier who has left. Let's look at the members who are now leaving because they do not believe there are any solutions left in this government to deliver long-term cost-of-living relief.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hart): Member for Stafford.

Mr JANETZKI: There is the member for Sandgate and the Attorney-General. Who else have we got?

An honourable member interjected.

Mr JANETZKI: I am coming to that.

Mr Sullivan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Stafford, I just said that you will cease your interjections and you interjected straightaway.

Mr Sullivan: I did not hear that, sorry.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Okay. Maybe my microphone was not on. There will be no more warnings, member for Stafford.

Mr JANETZKI: There is the member for Rockhampton. We had the member for Maryborough's dalliance with the Katter party. None of them believe that this government is capable of any of the long-term structural solutions necessary to put downward pressure on the cost of living here in Queensland.

The most notable from the past week is the Assistant Minister for Treasury, Trade and Investment. The assistant treasurer has made absolutely clear what she thinks—

Mr de BRENNI: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I refer you to standing order 236 and ask you to bring the member back to the bill before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leader of the House, I was listening quite closely to the Treasurer's speech, which was pretty wideranging. I am going to give the member for Toowoomba South a little bit of latitude, but he will come back to the bill.

Mr JANETZKI: It might inform the Leader of the House to know that the Treasurer spent the best part of 20 minutes talking about a government a decade in the wilderness, talking about the federal leader of the National Party, talking about nuclear power, talking about projects on the Sunshine Coast. It might be worth the Leader of the House listening to the contribution of the Treasurer.

The Treasurer's contribution might be relevant, but I really want to know what the assistant treasurer thinks. I think we know what the assistant treasurer thinks of both the bill and the government's long-term plan for a structural solution to the cost-of-living crisis—and in fact the budget preparation—by her actions over the past week. We have seen an admission that the member for Ipswich wants out. The member for Ipswich was brought in as an assistant minister to former premier Palaszczuk, as I recall. She then fell out of the ministry. She was hand-picked by the Premier himself to return to the ministry in this portfolio.

Ms PEASE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I know that you have already given some direction to the member to come back to the long title of the bill. He seems to be fascinated with going off on some other tangent. I ask that you call him back to the bill.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The member is responding, as I hear it, to comments that the Treasurer made. Again, member for Toowoomba South, I draw you back to the bill. I have given you a fair bit of latitude, but I draw you back to the bill now please.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. After being hand-picked by the Premier to assist the Treasurer in the preparation of this appropriations bill—and the objectives of the bill talk about Queensland families experiencing a higher cost of living due to global pressures, and I will come to that in a moment—presumably the assistant treasurer was tasked with the responsibility of assisting the Treasurer in developing this appropriations bill and preparing for the budget next month, and the assistant treasurer shows her gratitude to the Premier by walking away—and not just walking away but launching a preselection challenge against, as I understand it, her mentor in Ipswich. At a time when the assistant treasurer should be focused on this appropriations bill and the task at hand, we have an assistant treasurer who wants out.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Pause the clock. Resume your seat please. Member, I have been listening to your contribution and I am having difficulty finding the link back to the bill. I would ask you to come back to the bill and stay relevant to the bill, thanks.

Mr JANETZKI: Overnight the Treasurer announced that the Queensland budget will be moving into deficit, and that is another broken promise from the Treasurer. The Treasurer promised in the last budget that the budget would be in surplus, but we are used to the Treasurer breaking promises—26 times a broken tax promise, destroying investor confidence and bringing about regulatory uncertainty, but we are used to that. What has been most troubling about the deficit that has been announced is that this change has been brought about while the Treasurer and the Premier have been busy working their factional numbers and counting the numbers over the last period of time before the bringing down of the budget.

When the Treasurer is busy counting his numbers in caucus, it shows that he is not caring about the cost-of-living pressures facing Queensland. When the assistant treasurer is busy counting numbers for a preselection challenge in Ipswich, it shows that she does not care about the cost-of-living pressures facing Queenslanders. Instead of counting caucus numbers and branch numbers for preselection challenges, this government should be focused on the numbers that matter to Queensland families around their kitchen tables. The numbers that matter to the families of Queensland around their

kitchen tables and as reflected in the very objectives of this appropriations bill where the Treasurer talks about Queensland families experiencing a high cost of living due to global pressures are obvious. The Treasurer himself has pinned the higher cost of living and talked about that as an objective of this bill.

Last year we know that Queensland households faced, in many regards, some of the highest cost-of-living increases in the nation. Power was 19.9 per cent higher last year, which is three times the average of the other states, and I will come back to the issue of power. Our water costs were the highest in the nation last year, rising by 16 per cent; our transport costs were the highest in the nation last year, rising by 4.2 per cent; health care was up by 6.7 per cent; rents were up by 8.4 per cent last year in Queensland; and insurance costs last year in Queensland went up by 18.5 per cent.

These are the numbers that the Queensland government should be focused on. Instead, we have the Treasurer and the Premier worrying about their numbers in caucus and doing factional deals to get the leadership and the deputy leadership while the assistant treasurer, no less, was working numbers for a preselection challenge. These are the cost-of-living numbers that matter to Queensland households, but it is not just those numbers: victims of crime went up by 17 per cent in the last 12 months and criminal offences went up in the state of Queensland by 11 per cent last year. We know that stolen car offences went up by 15.9 per cent last year. These are the numbers—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member, I bring you back to the bill please.

Mr JANETZKI: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker. These are the numbers that matter to Queenslanders. There are question marks over the government's Energy and Jobs Plan. How much does the foundational battery of the north cost today: is it \$7 billion, is it \$12 billion or is it north of \$18 billion?

Mrs Frecklington: They can't even agree.

Mr JANETZKI: They cannot agree; I take the interjection from the member for Nanango. If those opposite cannot agree, how can anyone have any confidence that this government has any appreciation of what that project costs? Just last year a billion dollars was allocated to operational expenses but there was not a single dollar in a capital statement for that project, and here we are ahead of the budget still not knowing what that project will cost. We are 1,521 police down on what was promised by this government before the last election. Ramping has hit 45½ per cent—the worst ramping ever in Queensland history. Again, this is happening while the health minister was busy doing factional numbers trying to get the leadership in the shortest leadership challenge of all time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I am just going to take some advice. Resume your seat please, member for Toowoomba South. Member, I appreciate the general point that you are trying to make, and I have given you some latitude in relation to that, but this bill is clearly about the cost of electricity and you are straying all over the place. I have cautioned you several times to come back to the long title of the bill and I would ask you to remain relevant to the bill.

Mr JANETZKI: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I again return to the policy objectives of the bill and the reasons for them—

Queensland families are experiencing a higher cost of living due to global pressures.

As it says, Queensland families are experiencing a higher cost of living. I have outlined the numbers and, believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have a lot more numbers, but I will move on because they are just numbers.

I want to reflect a little bit on some of the human challenges in terms of what these numbers mean to actual Queensland households and families. As I have travelled around Queensland as the shadow Treasurer and as the shadow minister for cost of living has travelled around Queensland, we continue to meet Queenslanders who are struggling with the bills on the kitchen table. Obviously this appropriations bill is targeted at power bills, but there are also other bills on the kitchen table that are of significant concern to Queensland families. I wanted to share a couple of their stories for the House to put a human face to the cost-of-living challenges facing Queensland, because it is about numbers, yes—and I have a lot more numbers—but it is about Queensland families and Queensland households. I have said to these hardworking Queenslanders that I would raise their circumstances in this House to give the human voice to this challenge facing our state. One person from regional Queensland has said to me—

I personally have been affected by the sharp increase in rental prices ... so speak from experience. I was a model tenant with the home kept immaculately and my rent paid well in advance.

When it came time to renew my lease the rent had increased ... over my budget (even whilst working full time and earning a good wage as a single person with mobility concerns). I am reluctant to complain or implement a breach due to the lack of available and affordable rental properties in my region.

We have spoken about what it will take to increase supply. I also wanted to share another cost-of-living story from a hardworking Queenslander who is doing it tough. It was a very long email, but there was one part of this hardworking Queenslander's story that really resonated with me. It was about a couple desperately trying to get on the housing ladder. This person said—

But I am angry and frustrated. I don't know what to do to bring my family through this. I do my best to work hard and I would have hoped to be able to give my children better than I had.

That is the cost-of-living pressure that so many Queenslanders are facing. The final story I want to share, again from regional Queensland, relates to insurance premiums for Queensland families, as the policies objectives and the reason for them talk about a higher cost of living. This person contrasted two insurance policies, one from a set of units in regional New South Wales and the other from a set of units similarly constructed but located in Cairns. The contrast between the strata title insurance premium ranged between \$3,715 in regional New South Wales to \$31,000 in regional Cairns. I tell those three personal stories of Queenslanders who are living through an enormous cost-of-living struggle because they are all numbers. These stories are often heavy with numbers, but it is important that this House reflects on the human stories, the human challenges of what Queenslanders are facing.

Before I conclude I want to return briefly to the reasons this appropriation bill is necessary. As I have said, we support this appropriation and the support for hardworking Queenslanders. The reason we are here in the first place is that this government has failed to deliver long-term structural solutions to cost-of-living challenges and there has been no greater area of failing than the power supply here in Queensland. Ultimately, that comes down to the failure to properly maintain Callide. It is the government's failure to properly maintain Callide. It has been nearly three years. It is three years this week since Callide came down—a catastrophic explosion at Callide that we know has driven up power prices across Queensland.

It is not just the opposition saying this. We have argued for a very long period for there to be transparency about the reasons Callide went down, and we are still waiting for Dr Brady's report. We will continue to wait because the people of Queensland deserve to know why it has taken so long. What was the cause, but also why has it taken so long for Callide to become fully operational again? We are still waiting. As I said, it has not just been the opposition saying that it has pushed up power prices here in Queensland. It has been the Queensland Competition Authority, it has been the Auditor-General and it has been these independent bodies that have clearly stated the reasons power prices have been higher in Queensland. It is because of this government's failure to properly invest in the maintenance of our power plants to maintain a reliable and affordable energy supply. It is time for the energy minister to deliver that report and to deliver answers to the people of Queensland.

We have made clear the long-term structural solutions we need to put downward pressure on the cost of living here in Queensland. We need to properly maintain our power plants like Callide to ensure that they are delivering that affordable and reliable power. It runs deeper than that when it comes to cost of living, and I refer again to the Queensland families who are experiencing a higher cost of living. It is time for a government in Queensland that delivers a lower cost of living, not a government that introduces a renter's tax in the middle of a housing crisis, driving out investment and pushing up rents. It should not be a government that introduces a patient's tax in the middle of a health crisis that drives up presentations to emergency departments and drives down bulk-billing to the most vulnerable and the elderly.

We do need a government that ensures the release of land—lot approvals are down 30 per cent—to add supply and put downward pressure on housing and rents. That is the kind of government that we need here in Queensland. On this side of the House we will not stop fighting for Queenslanders when it comes to cost of living. We need a government to get on top of the youth crime crisis to put downward pressure on insurance premiums. We need a government to invest in flood mitigation works to put downward pressure on cost of living in Queensland, on insurance premiums here in Queensland.

Across every single one of our portfolios we on this side of the House will continue to argue that this government has failed Queensland not just now but for 10 years into the past and they are failing Queenslanders 10 years into the future because they have no plan. They have no plan to put downward pressure with structural solutions on the cost of living here in Queensland, and nothing will change until such time as Queenslanders change the government in October. It is more than time for Queenslanders to show Labor the door in 2024.