




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Member for Pumicestone; Cost of Living

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (2.47 pm): I have sat in this House and just had to listen to a diatribe from the member for Pumicestone. On behalf of all LNP members, I completely reject what she was alleging. I have a question for the member for Pumicestone: if the member for Pumicestone's standards are so high, how come the member for Pumicestone did not out the Premier and how come the member for Pumicestone was complicit in the Premier's mistruth here in this parliament?

I will now move on to the cost of living—a fact and an issue that is hurting each and every Queenslanders. All across this state, no matter where we go, Queenslanders are talking about the cost-of-living crisis. In terms of the bills that land in people's mailboxes and when they sit around their kitchen tables, what are the bills that are important to Queenslanders? They are talking about struggling to make ends meet. People are telling me that they are looking at turning their fridges off at night, whether they can afford to pay for groceries to put in that fridge to feed their kids when they go to school or choosing between paying their electricity bill or whether their son or daughter plays sport. We know that the weekly grocery shop has risen, and as a mum of three I know that firsthand.

Two weeks ago I wrote to the Premier asking the Premier to widen his supposed terms of reference for the inquiry into cost-of-living pressures, and let me be abundantly clear, and I hope the Premier is listening to this: given the misleading statements that he has been desperately trying to peddle—and we know the Premier likes to have misleading statements—the big supermarkets must absolutely be held to account. The critical drivers of the Queensland cost-of-living crisis must also be put under the microscope in the inquiry, including those that the state government is responsible for: the impact of electricity on rising grocery costs; the impact of skyrocketing insurance costs on grocery prices because of the crime crisis in this state; the impact of rising water costs, and let us remember that this is a government that refuses to do anything about water; and the impact of increased transport costs on those grocery bills. Why? Because we have billions of dollars worth of backlogged road maintenance across this state.

Skyrocketing electricity prices have impacted businesses run by mums and dads. We have a minister in denial, who said that electricity prices are not going to go up in this state. Guess what: the minister has been called out, and so has this government. The Queensland Competition Authority and the Queensland Auditor-General have both said that lack of supply due to Callide C being offline for over 1,000 days—we have been told how the explosion happened but we do not know why—has contributed to increased prices. When there is a 19.9 per cent increase in electricity prices—triple the national average—that is a cost-of-living problem. When there is 6.7 per cent increase in health costs across the state—the highest in the nation—that is a cost-of-living problem. When there is a 4.2 increase in transport costs—the highest in the nation—and an 8.4 per cent increase in rent in

Queensland, that leads to a cost-of-living crisis. There has been an 18.5 per cent increase in insurance costs because of the crime rate in this state. That leads to a cost-of-living crisis. There has been a 7.4 per cent increase in the cost of sports participation which leads to a cost-of-living crisis in this nation.

It is important to recognise that these are not just numbers on a spreadsheet; these are everyday people. In the last few weeks I have driven from Cairns to Mackay, stopping at many places along the way: Innisfail, Tully, Townsville, Ayr and Bowen. Let me tell members a story about Cheryl, who owns a fish and chip shop in Townsville. She told me how she is struggling to pay those huge electricity bills. She is supporting people who are down and out and she does not want to have to raise the prices of her chips or her fish. It is people like Cheryl who deserve to have an expansion of the cost-of-living inquiry to not only hold the big supermarkets to account but also hold this government to account for issues that affect everyday Queenslanders.