



Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 6 March 2024

MOTION

Cost of Living, Select Committee



Mrs FRECKLINGTON (Nanango—LNP) (5.01 pm): I move—

That:

1. a select committee, known as the Cost of Living Select Committee, be established to examine:
 - (a) extent of cost-of-living rises, including big supermarket grocery prices, on Queenslanders;
 - (b) the impact of state government policies, taxes and charges on these increases; and
 - (c) strategies to mitigate these impacts.
2. in undertaking the inquiry, the committee consider:
 - (a) all matters impacting on price rises;
 - (b) the impact of cost of living pressures that lie within state jurisdiction including:
 - (i) the impact of rising electricity prices on grocery costs and on Queenslanders, noting that Queensland has experienced the highest electricity price rises in the nation since Callide C went offline;
 - (ii) the impact of skyrocketing insurance prices on small and family business and on Queenslanders, due to the Queensland youth crime crisis;
 - (iii) the impact of rising water costs on grocery costs and on Queenslanders, as well as a lack of water security;
 - (iv) the impact of increased transport costs on grocery costs and on Queenslanders due to the government's failure to invest in our road network;
 - (c) pressures on commodity supply chains leading to increased costs;
 - (d) effective policies to exert downward pressure on costs;
3. the committee:
 - (a) has the power to call for persons, documents and other things;
 - (b) may present reports to the Legislative Assembly as it determines;
 - (c) ceases at the dissolution of this parliament.
4. the committee consists of seven members chaired by a member of the parliamentary crossbench.

This morning I gave notice of this motion to establish a select committee known as the Cost of Living Select Committee. Let's have a history lesson on why we need to move this motion today. On roughly 19 January this year, Premier Steven Miles—not the last premier but this one—announced that he was going to have a select committee on the cost of living.

An opposition member interjected.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will take that interjection; it was going to be his No. 1 priority. He was going to come into this House and demand that we look into the big supermarkets. Great. I sat here every day of the last sitting week—the Premier's first week—waiting for his No. 1, top priority, and what did we hear? On Tuesday, what did we hear? Crickets. On Wednesday, what did we hear? Nothing. Then on Thursday—I had my notes printed out—I thought, 'Right, I will move an amendment because,

yes, we need to hold the big supermarkets to account—you betcha we do—but we need to expand that inquiry.’ On the Thursday I sat here in anticipation, because a select committee on the cost of living was the Premier’s No. 1 priority.

An opposition member: It was urgent.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It was urgent; I take that interjection. What happened? Nothing—absolutely nothing. What did I do? I hit the road. I went up to Cairns, where it was great to see Yolonde Entsch and Bree James. I spoke to small business owners with the Leader of the Opposition. We went to Chambers in Cairns and met Leith, an amazing small business owner who has been broken into many times. Her insurance has gone up. Her electricity has gone up. She does not want to have to rip off her customers. It is a beautiful coffee shop. Then I was in Townsville with Cheryl, the owner of Fulham Road Fish Bar—there is no greater Queenslander than Cheryl. She spoke about how her electricity prices have gone through the roof. I also went to Toowoomba and many other places.

We need to expand this inquiry. Yes, we need to hold the big supermarkets to account, but we need to investigate the factors that are holding this state back—electricity, insurance. We have to tackle these issues as well as transport and rents. These are the issues that are affecting Queenslanders’ everyday bills. They are state government controlled issues.

After that sitting week, I wrote to the Premier to say, ‘I suggest that we expand your supermarket inquiry to include very important issues such as electricity costs, health costs, transport costs, rent costs and insurance costs and sports participation costs.’ By the way, I wrote to the crossbench as well, inviting them to examine the cost of living in this inquiry. What did I get back from the Premier? I got nothing back from the Premier by way of correspondence. I did get a juvenile response from this Premier, calling Queenslanders ‘dumb’ for calling out the issues. The Minister for Education looks confused. It might help if she read the headline in the *Courier-Mail*. The cost of living is an issue for Queenslanders. That is why I plead with this House to expand the inquiry. Let’s get around the state and find out what we can do to ease the cost of living.

This week I received an email from a distraught couple in Bundaberg. They compared electricity bills a year apart: January 2023, \$314; January 2024, \$643. I give a big shout-out to Bundaberg’s Bree James, who will be a member of this House. This constituent put a post on the member for Bundaberg’s page and only got in response a spruiked government line about the cost-of-living rebate. We need change and we need this inquiry.

(Time expired)