




Speech By
Jennifer Howard

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL
APPROPRIATION BILL
Consideration in Detail (Cognate Debate)
Appropriation Bill

Cost of Living and Economics Committee, Report

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (12.09 pm): I rise to speak on the budget estimates report for the Cost of Living and Economics Committee. I want to thank all of the committee members for their fantastic work. The Queensland budget handed down in June makes acting on the cost of living for Queenslanders our No. 1 priority. When it comes to helping Queensland households, the Miles government is doing what matters by setting out a responsible plan to support Queenslanders and invest in our future.

Our budget provided just over \$11 billion in concessions to lower household bills. As members of this House, we speak to our community every day. We know the pressures they are feeling and these relief measures will go a long way to easing some of the strain. We have provided every Queensland household with a \$1,000 rebate off their electricity bills. More than 1.3 million Queensland householders have now received that rebate. Since we introduced it on 1 July, many Ipswich residents have told me how grateful they are for this cost-of-living relief.

On 5 August, we introduced 50-cent fares for public transport. This will save some commuters in Ipswich well over \$1,000 over the course of the six-month trial, helping them to save extra money for Christmas and summer holidays. There has definitely been a reduction in traffic congestion since we introduced those fares. That was one of our aims as a government. We have achieved that goal because many people are taking up the transport offer. As the member for Mount Ommaney said, it is not just money they are saving; it is time as well. We want to support public transport because it is a really effective way to get around. It saves time, it saves money and it eases congestion. Car registration costs will be reduced by 20 per cent for 12 months, benefiting 5.7 million Queenslanders.

We have increased the number of FairPlay vouchers, which are really hitting the mark with local families. I was at a BMX open day a couple of weeks ago and people there were all very excited about the \$200 FairPlay vouchers. We need to keep talking about the vouchers because there are a lot of families who still have not applied for them. For the great number of families who have applied for them, they are making a huge difference. They are making a difference not only to families' bottom lines but also to our kids. Healthy kids are our state's future, and that is why we have expanded the program and why our 2024-25 budget has allocated an extra \$15 million to the School and Community Food Relief Program. This program helps our most vulnerable kids to access healthy breakfasts and lunches at school so that they can engage in learning and thrive. In my electorate of Ipswich, 12 state schools are being supported through the school breakfast program. It is just another cost-of-living budget measure that will provide real assistance to Ipswich families who are doing it tough.

The member for Mount Ommaney also spoke about our free kindy program. What a huge difference that is making. Free kindy and our Textbook and Resource Allowance are going a long way towards helping the bottom line in family budgets. For older kids and young people, we are providing fee-free TAFE. I was with the member for Bundamba and Minister for Training and Skills Development last week talking to some apprentices about the expansion of the \$1,000 rebate which will help cover the cost of their tools. This rebate is really helping. The work they are doing and the skills they are acquiring at our gorgeous TAFEs that have world-class facilities will go a long way towards addressing workplace skills shortages.

Supporting apprenticeships is a no-brainer. Our free apprenticeships and free traineeships for under-25s mean that more of our young people in Queensland can benefit from fee-free training in high-priority areas, giving them access to secure, well-paid jobs. First year apprentices are benefiting from the \$1,000 cashback I just mentioned. It will help them pay for the tools that they need to work in construction, plumbing, engineering and electrical careers. This investment is vital if we want to increase the number of tradies so we can build more homes faster under our Homes for Queenslanders plan. We are also making it easier for businesses to employ apprentices and trainees with our 50 per cent payroll tax rebate, which we have extended to 30 June next year. It will help Queensland businesses employ trainees.

Our budget is investing in the state's future, but the LNP and David Crisafulli have made it clear that they oppose our plan of making mining companies pay their fair share, which is how we are able to fund this cost-of-living relief package. David Crisafulli and the LNP want to hand back billions of dollars to mining companies, which means they will have to make cuts. Will they cut our FairPlay vouchers? Will they cut fee-free TAFE? Will they cut the cashback for apprentices? We do not know.