




Speech By  
**Ray Stevens**

**MEMBER FOR MERMAID BEACH**

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**CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)**

 **Mr STEVENS** (Mermaid Beach—LNP) (5.49 pm): I rise to speak on the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill 2024. This appropriation bill has been brought on for debate in a hurry because of one thing and one thing only: it is what we used to call a pork barrel before the election in October. We are four weeks away from a budget when this rebate could have been considered in the overall financial position of Queensland, but we had to have this appropriation bill so that we could get the rebate out quickly before the election in October.

I fail to see how adding \$2.2 billion on to the credit card of the taxpayers of Queensland will help, and the Treasurer told us today that he is going to run a \$3 billion deficit. He is happy to see the ratings agencies downgrade us again, so we will be paying higher interest rates on the higher debt that Labor has run up. It sounds to me like the Treasurer does not care what will happen in the future because it will not be his problem! That is the wrong attitude for a responsible treasurer to take on behalf of Queenslanders. That downgrade, which he said will probably happen, will no doubt lead to a bigger cost on Queensland taxpayers.

As far as the \$1,000 pork barrel is concerned, Mr Albanese threw another \$300 pork barrel on top of it. All the pollsters said that that had no effect in terms of his ratings in the federal sphere, so we will see what effect the \$1,000 pork barrel that this government is rushing through without any regard to debt or to the future of Queensland will have in terms of this government's electoral prospects. In my view, this \$1,000 will be taken with glee by Queenslanders.

I can tell the House one Queenslanders who will take it with glee—and we raised at the committee level the fact that this rebate is not means tested—and that is our good friend Clive Palmer. He has around 20-odd houses at last count on the Sovereign Islands, so he will get about \$20,000 that he really needs! When we raised at the committee the fact that it was not going to be means tested, they said, 'Oh, we have no capacity to do that.' They did not have the capacity to do it because it is being rushed out in an appropriation bill as a pork barrel for the election coming up in four months. They could have means tested it if they had spent the time and effort to utilise all the statistics from around Queensland. That way only the needy and the people who deserve this \$1,000 would be getting it, but no. We have the Clive Palmers of the world with his 20 houses—it could even be more; I am not sure—getting \$1,000 a lot. He will be very happy to get that on top of the \$15 million a week he gets in royalties.

What the government did not do is care for small businesses. Yes, small businesses will get \$325 as opposed to the \$1,000 that every voter will get. Oh, did I say 'every person'? I meant to say that every voter will get \$1,000. The limited support for small business is indicative of how Labor treats small business. They are the biggest users of power. They are the ones that employ the people and need a cost-of-living break of \$1,000 because they will be the ones that will be out of a job if small business does not survive due to the rapidly rising electricity prices under this Labor government, yet the government saw fit only to give \$325 to small business and \$1,000 to every voter. It is business power costs that will add to the cost of living. Those costs are passed on to every consumer. The price

consumers pay for products covers the retailers' costs to sell it. Included in those costs will be their labour costs, their rent costs and their power costs. Only giving them \$325 is another smack in the face for small business.

In terms of the quest for renewables, we heard on this morning's news, 'Stand by for the winter: blackouts in South Australia and Victoria'. That is because they have gone down the same track as this mob up here. They hate coal. That is the problem. They have not bothered to fix the Callide power facility which would have added to having a cheaper supply of power throughout Queensland. As the shadow minister mentioned earlier, they have left Callide for nearly three years without fixing it because it is a coal-fired power station. Those down south are facing blackouts because they do not have the capacity for coal generation to support their renewables, which they say are still not in place and are still costly. They are still not the cheapest power that they keep saying it is.

Yes, we are happy to take coal royalties. I think we took about \$7 billion in the last budget in coal royalties. We ship it off to China for China to burn it into the atmosphere, but we cannot burn it at Callide because it is coal and that is a nasty thing for the left wing of the Labor Party. They hate coal. They cannot even say the word 'coal' because it is an absolute anathema to their left-wing ideology.

This bill is to help alleviate the highest problem for people out there in the community, and that is the cost of living. We know it. Their polling is showing it. It is just in front of youth crime, I might add. Cost-of-living pressures will continue with these inflationary injections by the government, particularly by the federal government through the just announced federal budget. The Reserve Bank, which I trust a lot more than the Labor Party's statistics, are saying that there may even be another rate rise this year. Inflation may go up because of the federal government spending in their budget. Another rate rise will send a lot of people to the wall in terms of their mortgages. A lot of people are coming off fixed terms. One of my tradies was talking to me about it. He said that in another month he is coming off a fixed 1.9 per cent interest rate and will be going to six per cent which is now on offer through the banks. We are going to see a lot of difficulties out there in the community.

This \$1,000 pork barrel is a one-off sugar hit which everybody will be happy to take, including Clive, as I mentioned before. The reality of the matter is that it is not going to help with the cost of living. It is not going to solve youth crime. It is not going to fix the health system. It is not going to fix the housing problem in terms of building new homes or renting homes. It is not going to fix the public housing problem that we have had under this third-term Labor government, which four months to the close of parliament is trying to pork barrel its way back into power.

If Queenslanders do not get the message that this Labor government is at the heart of their major issues, particularly when it comes to the cost of living—with their power bills climbing exponentially due to the bad organisation of the government in relation to the power stations—and if Queenslanders are taken for a ride on this particular road again with this pork-barrelling, I do not believe it is going to happen. The people of Queensland are smarter than that. They will take the \$1,000 gladly, as we all will in terms of our power bills.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr STEVENS:** It is going to everybody. Everybody in this parliament is going to get this \$1,000. Those opposite are all cheering for their \$1,000. I am not sure which members on that side are going to cash it out, as I am told you can. The bottom line is that Queenslanders will take the money, but in October 2024 they are going to show this Labor government the door.