




Speech By  
**Tony Perrett**

**MEMBER FOR GYMPIE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 21 May 2024

### **CHEAPER POWER (SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL)**

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (8.43 pm): I rise to speak on the Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill. I do not oppose giving relief for the cost-of-living crisis. However, we need to be honest. This subsidy is the direct result of the government mismanaging electricity prices in Queensland. Under Labor, Queenslanders are experiencing the sharpest cost-of-living increases in the nation. In 2023 electricity went up 19.9 per cent—the highest in the nation. Health costs were up 6.7 per cent—the highest in the nation. Transport costs were up 4.2 per cent—the highest in the nation. Rent was up 8.4 per cent, insurance was up 18.5 per cent and sports participation costs were up 7.4 per cent. Queenslanders are being slugged by exorbitant prices being made worse by Labor. It is Labor which allowed prices to get out of control.

The bill is a temporary bandaid solution for a problem which has been exacerbated by Labor policies, mismanagement, cover-ups and incompetence. The government is now using taxpayers' funds to fix a political problem. Some \$2.5 billion of taxpayers' dollars is being redirected to help ease the pain caused by Labor's policies. That \$2.5 billion could have gone towards many desperately needed projects and upgrades in Gympie which have been delayed, ignored or pushed into the too-hard basket. That \$2.5 billion could have gone towards Gympie's desperately needed new hospital, upgraded and delivered new police stations at Rainbow Beach and Imbil, delivered on time our fire and rescue station, fixed our deteriorating state roads, delivered overtaking lanes on the Tin Can Bay Road, upgraded the Rainbow Beach Road and Mary Valley Highway and provided a new and much needed multipurpose sport and entertainment facility.

The fact that the government has introduced this relief measure proves it has created an untenable situation for many Queenslanders. Last year, Queenslanders had significantly greater power price increases than any other state or territory. Queenslanders paid nearly 20 per cent more in their power bills—triple the national average. The complete inability to properly maintain our state owned power assets has made these rebates necessary. The failure at Callide power plant and bringing it back online is directly contributing to our increased prices. The Australian Energy Regulator found that in the two years since the Callide explosion underlying wholesale power prices increased 135 per cent. For more than 1,000 days the government has done everything possible to cover-up what happened.

Whistleblowers have said that chronic underfunding in maintenance caused the explosion. It is not surprising. For years the government has failed to adequately maintain and upgrade the network, with Curra residents weekly experiencing the fallout from an unreliable system. The government claims the proposed Borumba pumped hydro project will put downward pressure on electricity prices. There is a lot of spin and self-congratulations about the project. This week the minister said in an answer to my question that Borumba will not be putting any power into the grid until 2030—that is another six years and assumes the project will run on time. No-one knows how much the taxpayer will pay for what is claimed to be the largest infrastructure project in the history of the state. The government arrogantly says 'Trust us'. It stubbornly refuses to release the business case. Residents of the Gympie region and the state need to see the business case to get a better understanding of the cost of the project. It does not account for anything.

Earlier this month the National Energy Regulator found that our electricity costs are soaring while they are falling in the rest of the country. It said that our energy costs have soared 75 per cent to \$118 per megawatt hour in the first three months of this year. The rest of Australia had an eight per cent decrease to \$76. The subsidy does nothing about fixing the problem of high retail power prices. Canstar Blue reveals our average energy plan offers of \$1,969 are significantly more expensive than New South Wales at \$1,827 or Victoria at \$1,571. The consumer price index data shows our electricity costs skyrocketed 19.9 per cent compared to a 6.6 per cent increase in New South Wales, 8.6 per cent in Victoria and a national average of 6.9 per cent.

The government has refused to investigate its direct role and culpability in pushing up the cost of living of Queenslanders. It has refused to investigate its role in increasing electricity, transport, insurance and water costs. Traffic congestion from a lack of road maintenance and failure to deliver the road network we need has increased our fuel bills, not enough housing has driven up rent, and housing prices and government fees and charges such as car registrations are increasing higher than inflation.

I welcome any relief to address Labor's cost-of-living crisis. However, this is a blatantly cynical move by a desperate government which refuses to address its role in increasing our cost of living. I do not oppose the bill.