

8 May 2024

Committee Secretary
Cost of Living and Economics Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

By email: COLEC@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Cheaper Power (Supplementary Appropriation) Bill 2024 ('the Bill')

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback in relation to the above.

About QCOSS

Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) is Queensland's peak body for the social service sector. Our vision is to achieve equality, opportunity, and wellbeing for all Queenslanders.

QCOSS' position

We welcome the intent of the Bill to provide cost-of-living relief on household budgets (including mortgage repayments, rent, groceries and fuel) through a \$1,000 credit on energy bills.

QCOSS' recent budget submission to '[Reduce the cost-of-living](#)' called for the Queensland Government to 'Provide ongoing bill relief...' and to 'commit to continuing the electricity bill rebate to vulnerable Queensland households while electricity costs remain high.'¹ This position was developed with QCOSS as a member of the [Power Together Alliance](#) which seeks to ensure that no Queenslanders are left behind in the energy transformation towards a cleaner energy future.

Our response to the Bill seeks to qualify our support with an equity lens. Low-income households are currently more likely to experience energy vulnerability and disadvantage. Low-income households spend double the amount of their disposable income on energy than middle-income households.² This is partly attributed to Queensland renters being more likely to live in homes with poor energy efficiency.³

In relation to the Bill, we raise the following:

- Many vulnerable Queenslanders will miss out. We welcome measures to include consumers who are in areas reliant on card-operated meters. We note that many living in remote regions, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, will benefit from this measure. We also welcome arrangements to include households in embedded networks receiving their electricity through authorised on-suppliers. However, energy consumers

¹ QCOSS budget submission FY2024-25. 'Reduce the cost of living' (2024) <https://www.qcooss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/3.-Reduce-cost-of-living-V2.pdf>

² Australian Energy Regulator. (2021a). Annual retail markets report 2020-2021. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. <https://www.aer.gov.au/system/files/Annual%20Retail%20Markets%20Report%202020-21.pdf>

³ Consumer Policy Research Centre. (2020). Exploring regulatory Approaches to Consumer Vulnerability: A Report for the AER. Canberra: Consumer Policy Research Centre.

whose premises are not separately metered or who don't receive a separate electricity bill, e.g. where electricity is included as part of their rent, will not be eligible to receive the rebate. Further, people experiencing homelessness and those living in supported accommodation, will not benefit from the cost-of-living rebate, although they are most in need of cost-of-living supports.

- In the previous financial year, the cost-of-living rebate was \$550 for most Queensland households. Vulnerable households such as seniors, pensioners and other concession card holders, received an additional cost-of-living rebate. This approach provided cost-of-living relief in a more targeted and equitable way, ensuring vulnerable households received a greater benefit and maximised the impact of the cost-of-living relief package.

To enable a more equitable approach to cost-of-living relief, the Queensland Government should explore options that will support improved targeting of low-income Queenslanders. This could involve measures to improve uptake of the Electricity Rebate through improved data sharing between key stakeholders.

QCOSS welcomes the intent of the Bill to provide cost-of-living relief on household budgets. However, our view is that the cost-of-living relief should be more targeted to vulnerable households and people on low incomes. Additional measures to provide targeted relief are outlined in QCOSS' budget submission and the Power Together policy platform. We urge the government to consider funding additional measures that provide for longer term and impactful outcomes for vulnerable households and people on low incomes.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission. If you have any questions, please contact Aimee McVeigh, Chief Executive Officer at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aimee McVeigh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aimee McVeigh
Chief Executive Officer