



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 24 March 2010

MOTION: SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.00 pm): I rise to support the amendment moved by the Premier. I was going to make a contribution to this debate, but I have realised that in order to have a debate there needs to be two opposing positions or policies. The position of the government is quite clear, unlike that of the opposition which has no policy on this issue—no policy on anything, for that matter. While we are making the tough decisions to take Queensland forward, the opposition continues to show us that it is more concerned about who is in the leader's seat than delivering for Queenslanders. This is not about privatisation but about obtaining good financial outcomes for Queensland in difficult times.

The GFC wiped billions from the bottom line. The assets sale is a response to the GFC and is designed to ease its impact. Like governments all over the world we have had to make some tough decisions. Queenslanders put their faith in this side of the House to make these tough decisions. That is exactly what we have been doing in the interests of Queensland's prosperity. The opposition continues to maintain its commitment to job cuts not jobs. It would scrap 12,000 Public Service jobs if it had its way.

I am not being chased down the street by my constituents pleading for the government to stop the sale of public assets. The No. 1 issue that I am hearing about at street stalls is jobs. People want to talk to me about jobs. We chose to keep our \$18.2 billion building program going to protect 127,000 Queensland jobs. We set a 100,000 jobs target because we know that jobs are the livelihoods of working families. The people of Mulgrave want employment opportunities. They want us to create and secure local jobs. The sale of assets will do this. It allows the government to continue what can only be described as an enviable track record of capital works in the electorate. For people in Mulgrave, the building program means investment in schools, health and roads. Here are a few examples from this year's budget: more than \$19 million to complete Innisfail State College; more than \$8 million for the new Yarrabah Primary Health Care Centre; almost \$1 million towards the replacement of ambulance stations at Gordonvale and Yarrabah; \$6 million towards construction of the new Jubilee Bridge at Innisfail, with an additional \$2 million committed this month for a total contribution of \$14 million. The government had a choice. It could have cut jobs and services or raised taxes. That did not happen. That was the last thing Queenslanders needed when they were already doing it tough. We did not want to consign more Queenslanders to the unemployment queues like those opposite. We understood that behind these jobs were working families.

It is a bit rich for those opposite to decry asset sales when their whole philosophy encourages privatisation. They spend a lot of time attacking the government but refuse to provide an alternative. They shelter in the comfort of opposition; responsible for nothing yet an opinion on everything. We need only to sift through *Hansard* to find numerous examples of members opposite extolling the virtues of privatisation but when it is convenient they argue to the contrary. This is political expediency at its worst. The LNP—where double standards rule; anything to jump on the band wagon; anything to cash in on community concerns. A responsible opposition would have supported the government. This faux moral high ground does not sit well with those opposite. Given the opportunity they would sell the lot.

The government has chosen its sale portfolio wisely. Assets up for sale are those requiring a considerable injection of funds for upgrade and maintenance in future years. That is money that will need

to be borrowed, that cannot be invested in hospitals, schools or highways and that the private sector can fund. Schools, roads, hospitals, ambulance, police and fire stations will be the legacy of this government's preparedness to make the hard decisions during tough times. Those opposite need to stop playing small target politics. They need to stop relying on the *Courier Mail* and the ETU to act as the unofficial opposition in Queensland and have the guts to explain their position and how they have sold out their core principles. Queenslanders know where we stand. We do not have a clue about where those opposite stand. Far from selling off our kids' future this process will guarantee a future for them.