




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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NEWMAN GOVERNMENT

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.05 am): Once again during question time what has been demonstrated is that not one minister was able to answer any question put by the opposition. This government has failed to answer questions. The Premier has set high standards. He has said that his ministers would be accountable, that they would come into this House and answer questions. What we saw today was far from that. The plans for the new Executive Building show that this government is simply not listening and has twisted priorities. Just two months after taking office the centrepiece of the government's first major capital works project turns out to be—wait for it!—new offices for the Premier and his ministers. While the government cheerfully sacks its own workers, it does not hesitate to look after itself.

This new Executive Building is unnecessary. It is no secret that the previous government examined a similar idea but rejected it because it had higher priorities, including the decentralisation of government staff to Bowen Hills and Ipswich. It is also no secret that when a new government comes in public servants put new ideas up to it. What has happened here is very clear. Essentially they have actually passed up an old idea and the government has taken it hook, line and sinker and said it is its own idea. We should also remember that some of the first people through the door of the new government are from the development industry and they are asking it to sell off its property holdings, especially valuable CBD buildings.

I welcome projects that generate jobs in the building industry, but so far this government's plan for selling state assets has not created a single new job. We also heard in the House today a question asked of the Treasurer in relation to a statement he made on 21 February this year to the *Financial Review* in which he said—and I quote for the benefit of the House—

We won't be selling any real estate without putting it forward to get a mandate from the people.

That is what Mr Nicholls told the Australian *Financial Review*. That is what he said. That was his pre-election commitment.

Mr SEENEY: I rise to a point of order. I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the parliament by not completing the quote. The Treasurer made it very clear to the parliament that that was a selective quote and quoted the full quote. I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition is deliberately misleading the parliament and unless she withdraws I will refer her to the committee accordingly.

Madam SPEAKER: That is a matter for the Deputy Premier to follow if he believes that the Leader of the Opposition is misleading the House.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What we saw yesterday was the Newman government sack 170 of its own IT staff as part of its purge of government workers. The Premier keeps talking about the cost of living. In fact, the first bill that we will be debating this week is the cost of living bill. All this government is concerned about is itself and a brand new office tower for the Premier and his ministers. That shows that this government has its priorities completely wrong.

Whilst this government is focused on the CBD, it is neglecting the people living in Cairns, the people living in Townsville, the people living in Toowoomba, the people living in Mount Isa. What message is it sending to those regional communities by focusing on the inner city? The Premier promised his government would be characterised by grace, humility and dignity, but after only two months in office, arrogance, self-indulgence and broken promises have become its hallmark. Just two months after the state election, this government has stopped listening to the community. It has cut funds to front-line community groups without listening to them. Sisters Inside and the Queensland Association for Healthy Communities are just the first to suffer that fate. As the Treasurer indicated last week, more front-line community groups will be denied funding. No doubt they too will not be given a fair hearing before being stripped of funds. This government refuses to listen to independent bodies such as the Sentencing Advisory Council. It abolishes the council and wastes the time and effort of all the community, legal and government representatives the previous government engaged to deliver independent analysis and advice to the judiciary on sentencing to help meet community expectations.

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: I warn members on my right: there are too many interjections.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is especially puzzling because the LNP supported the Sentencing Advisory Council in 2005 through a private member's bill from, if I recall correctly, the member for Southern Downs and again in 2010 when the previous government set up the now scrapped council. This government has stopped listening by wilfully bypassing parliamentary committees that are specifically designed to give members of the public, community groups and others a say in the legislative process.

This know-it-all government has simply stopped listening, but it has not stopped putting itself at the top of its list of priorities. We have seen that in this House with the Deputy Premier's move to evict the public from the Bernays Room and grab it for himself. We have seen it by the Deputy Premier's refusal to detail the cost of commandeering one of the showcase public spaces of this House for his own personal office use. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and others arrogantly—

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, resume your seat. I warn the minister in regard to interjections, particularly those that do not refer to a member by his or her appropriate title, and to cease using the term 'you'.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Premier, the Deputy Premier and others arrogantly fail to acknowledge that this House belongs to the people of Queensland, not the LNP. In fact, the Deputy Premier dismisses legitimate questions about wasteful and extravagant moves simply as 'silly stuff'. The last time the House sat, the Newman government was unable or unwilling to answer any questions about government job cuts. Today we saw its refusal to tell taxpayers the truth about the costs it is incurring because of its own extravagances. We still do not know how much the government's extra minister is costing taxpayers, nor do we know how much it is costing taxpayers to set up a whole new department just to keep the extra 19th minister busy. We still do not know how much the extra four assistant ministers, their staffing and accommodation costs are costing taxpayers.

We see a wasteful audit of public finances headed by their political mate, Peter Costello. No doubt it will have a well-worn and predictable outcome: blaming the previous government for all the world's ills. No doubt this government will use it as a cover story for more cuts to government jobs and services, just as they have used commissions of audit in New South Wales and Victoria. In fact, last week the Premier admitted he was wasting \$3,300 a day on Peter Costello, while his own workers face the sack. The Premier pre-empted the contents of the audit by saying, '... we will hear some things that are some very unpalatable truths.' Just like his political hero, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, this Premier does not establish an inquiry unless he has already decided its final outcome. It is a pity that the other well credentialed members of the audit team have been put in that position.

Today in the House I heard the most remarkable answer ever given to a question. The shadow Treasurer asked the Treasurer to detail the funding of the infrastructure projects over the financial year and to name some of the significant projects that are under way in Queensland. I find it absolutely absurd that the Treasurer of this state could not name a single project currently under construction in this state. Let me give a few examples for members who are new to the House: the Gold Coast rapid transit project, creating jobs; the Darra to Springfield railway line, creating jobs; the construction of the hospital, creating jobs. There are projects right across this state—

A government member: What's it called?

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Mackay Base Hospital, the expansion of the Cairns Base Hospital—but the Treasurer of this state could not name a single infrastructure project that is under way; nor could he say how many people were employed as part of this project.

Clearly, arrogance, self-indulgence and broken promises have replaced grace, humility and dignity. The know-it-all Newman government has stopped listening, but it has not stopped breaking the promises it made to those who voted for it. The last time this House sat, the Premier and ministers were unable to explain why they breached their pre-election commitment to their very own employees. A year ago, as reported in the *Courier-Mail*, the LNP leader and now Premier clearly ruled our government job cuts. He said, 'I do not believe any cutbacks are required.' However, now we see a public sector in turmoil. I am appalled to hear that some government workers have been reduced to tears as they worry about their future. No employee should be treated like this. No employee should have to go through such hurt and unknowing. The Premier talks about the cost of living and he went to the election talking about the cost of living, but it is incredibly hard to pay the bills, it is incredibly hard to provide for your family and it is incredibly hard to pay the mortgage if you do not have a job. Telling people on a Friday afternoon that they are dismissed and should not come to work on Monday is a shameful way to treat employees. This week the same thing will happen to the IT section in the Education Department. One hundred and eighty jobs are gone and those people will only find out when they turn up to work. We need to restore decency and dignity and treat people with respect. I will always stand up for the workers in this state.

(Time expired)