



Speech by


## Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 5 June 2012

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### NEWMAN GOVERNMENT

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.09 am): In the dark of last Friday night, Queenslanders caught a glimpse of the real face of the Newman government. Late on the last business day of the week, when it thought the opposition, the media and the people of Queensland were not looking, this government just happened to make not one, not two but three major announcements. This tactic to issue statements after dark is designed solely to keep Queenslanders in the dark. Late on Friday came the embarrassing backflip by the Attorney-General on the previous government's Criminal Organisation Act. The Attorney-General is on record as criticising that legislation and committing to scrap it, allegedly because it had not been used since being introduced in 2009.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker. I refer to your earlier ruling in that the opposition leader is referring to a matter that she herself has moved a motion to debate this afternoon and I ask for it to be ruled out of order.

**Madam SPEAKER:** Thank you, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Leader of the Opposition, with regard to the motion that is before the House, I ask you to refrain from anticipating that debate in your contribution.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. But what we saw was the police minister take the fall for the Attorney-General, because he did not have the guts to make the announcement himself. But the government was not finished with the dark-of-night announcements.

Next came its appointments to the boards of several government owned corporations. The government's tactics in waiting until dark on a Friday to make these announcements do no favours to those it has chosen to head the government owned corporations. The government managed to embarrass itself by giving the impression that it has something to hide. It is well known that several of the new chairs of the GOCs have strong connections to the LNP, but the way this government chose to announce their appointment only drew attention to the fact and forced them to start their new jobs under a cloud. The opposition believes the onus is now on the new GOC heads to perform, and the opposition will be closely monitoring the performance of all of the government owned corporations on behalf of taxpayers.

One of the government's new GOC chairpersons is Mr Shane Stone. Honourable members may recall that in 2001, when he was the federal Liberal Party President, Shane Stone wrote a memo to the then Prime Minister, John Howard. That memo was leaked and gave rise to the 'mean and tricky' description of the Howard government. To be fair to Mr Stone, he was not suggesting that description applied directly to the then Prime Minister. In fact, Mr Stone's memo was read as blaming the then Treasurer, Peter Costello, for allowing the government to become seen as being 'mean and tricky'. In his new role as Energex chairperson Mr Stone may bump into Mr Costello, but only if the former federal Treasurer even bothers to come to Brisbane to earn his \$13,400 a month! Taxpayers are paying him that much for working at most four days to draft the very predictable results of his Commission of Audit. Mr Stone may find his 'mean and tricky' description a perfect fit for a government that after just two months in office has broken a string of promises and is refusing to listen to Queenslanders.

Friday's third statement was perhaps the most interesting of all, and this one was released late in the night by the Deputy Premier at—as I am advised—7.23 pm and consisted of his humiliating backdown on the Alpha mine project. It stated—

I am advised that the Coordinator-General is dealing with the matters raised by the Commonwealth and is committed to work with the proponent and the Commonwealth to address those matters in a way which allows all parties to meet the requirements of the bilateral agreement. This will avoid the need for a separate Commonwealth assessment.

All week the Deputy Premier had been saying that he did not need to abide by the Commonwealth processes, but then what we saw late on Friday night—7.23 pm—was another humiliating backflip by the Deputy Premier. It was the Deputy Premier's admission that all his Joh style Canberra bashing could have only had one result—to stall a major job creation project started under the previous government. This announcement also highlighted the twisted priorities of the Newman government: politicking comes first and proper process comes a distant last.

Queenslanders could see the Deputy Premier's lack of respect for the proper process of parliamentary democracy on 7.30 QLD on Friday night. Apparently the reason ministers cannot answer any opposition questions is because we on this side of the House are not asking the right questions! To quote the Deputy Premier—

... too often they're asking questions which require facts or figures ...

He then went on to say—

I think everyone ... is puzzled by the questions the opposition is asking.

Then he claimed—and this is the one I like the most, and I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would agree with me—that the opposition is—

... pursuing minutiae, pursuing things that are very small in the scale of all of the problems that are facing Queenslanders ...

Ministers are puzzled only because they do not know their briefs or what is going on in their departments. It is hard to believe that the Deputy Premier believes that the jobs of Queenslanders are minutiae or that the government's broken promises are a small scale issue. This is the same Deputy Premier who on the same ABC program last month said, and let me quote this for the benefit of new members of the House—

... one of the things that I thought was unfortunate from opposition was the fact that ministers chose to talk about anything else in answering a question than the subject of the question. And I will take a very dim view of any of our ministers who do that.

Well, we saw that evidenced today, did we not, when the Deputy Leader of the Opposition clearly asked a question of the Deputy Premier to explain to the House the process that is required—the assessment process that is required—for a development application for a significant project in Queensland. This is basic, fundamental stuff that the Deputy Premier failed to answer. Anyone who is Deputy Premier of this state should be able to outline to the House—outline to anybody—the processes that are involved for significant projects and how they are approved in this state. But for the purpose of members opposite, I am prepared to read out of the standing orders section 113 relating to questions without notice to help the ministers in future as to how they should answer a question. It states—

- (1) Questions may be put to a Minister without notice relating to:
  - (a) public affairs with which the Minister is officially connected or to any matter of administration for which the Minister is responsible; or
  - (b) proceedings pending in the Legislative Assembly for which the Minister is responsible (but discussion must not be anticipated).

I am sure that ministers opposite will read their briefs, will talk to their department directors-general and will understand the issues impacting on their portfolio so that they will be able to come into this House tomorrow and answer questions put by the opposition to them. These questions are fair and reasonable, and, yes, I make no apology for asking questions about facts and figures, because as a former minister that is exactly what I had to know. I had to know the details of my portfolio. I had to know the details in depth. I had to know where funding was allocated. I will make no excuse in this House for asking questions about jobs, because we know that there are tens of thousands of jobs on the chopping block in the Public Service at the moment and not one minister can define what is critical and non-critical in their department. This was a memo that was sent around and the Premier should be able to define to this House what is critical and what is not critical.

Today we also saw the Minister for Housing and Public Works refuse to say how many people with a disability are working for GoPlants. Not only did he refuse to answer that question; he actually said that jobs in QBuild are under threat and that jobs in QFleet may be under threat. He would not answer the questions put by the opposition with regard to GoPlants. We will keep this government accountable. That is our job. We will stand up and fight for Queenslanders' jobs each and every day in this House and we will make sure that those opposite answer the questions.