




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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NEWMAN GOVERNMENT; COMMISSION OF AUDIT

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.04 am): As each week passes, the people of Queensland see with greater clarity the low quality of government being delivered by the LNP. Last Friday we saw further evidence of an arrogant government willing to break promises, mislead voters and talk down our state if it scores it cheap political points. On Friday we saw the LNP's political mate Peter Costello try his hardest—but fail—to reveal a budget black hole of Labor's making. Any reading of the Costello audit shows that the only black hole belongs to the LNP. It is the missing \$5.7 billion in savings the Premier and his Treasurer swore before the election they had identified. If our state's credit rating is under threat, it is because the LNP still has not detailed where those savings will come from. All we know is that the Costello audit states in black and white that some of those savings will come from the sacking of government workers. That is despite the Premier saying last year that he saw no need for cuts to government jobs and that public servants should welcome an LNP government. Little did voters know that he was already planning sackings and that public servants had everything to fear, especially the loss of their jobs. At 9.30 this morning we saw an answer to a question on notice tabled by the Premier which clearly outlines 37,000 temporary jobs here in Queensland. On top of that, there are another 18,000 casual jobs. So what we know is that potentially 55,000 jobs are clearly at risk under this new government.

In this place I previously recounted how more than a decade ago Mr Costello was labelled 'mean and tricky' by his own federal Liberal president. Shane Stone may be pleased to know that Mr Costello has lost neither of those qualities. In fact, he has found a perfect fit right here in Queensland in the form of this mean and tricky LNP government. Audits have been conducted in other states and at the federal level when conservative governments have come to power. They have been very predictable: they have all blamed previous Labor governments. We saw it in Victoria, we saw it in New South Wales and now we are seeing it quite clearly here in Queensland. They have all given cover to the permanent agenda of the conservatives of slashing jobs and cutting services. And Mr Costello's audit is no different.

Let me make it very clear: it is no different from what happened in New South Wales and what happened in Victoria. The only difference is that the LNP government could not help itself and just had to have a former Liberal Party politician head up the audit. Queensland taxpayers are forking out \$13,200 a month for Mr Costello to work maybe four days out of 30, if we are lucky! The audit would have been credible if Mr Costello had not been involved. Most of the audits interstate have been headed by independent experts with some authority. This audit in Queensland—let there be no mistake—is a blatant political exercise. From the moment he was announced as leading the audit, Mr Costello was seen very clearly as a hired political gun. How else would the Premier have been able to preview its findings three weeks ago by saying—

I'm very sure that when you hear the initial report of the Costello review that we will hear ... some very unpalatable truths.

So much for an independent audit! It was written by Mr Costello to fit the template set by the LNP. There was only one way Mr Costello could find any way to attack Labor through the audit and that was to rig the basis on which he assessed the previous government's record. His findings are based on two very flawed assumptions. First, he assumed that whatever government was elected in March they would have done nothing to address debt or spending. In other words, they would have taken their hands off the wheel

and just sat back. That was never going to happen. The second flawed assumption used by Mr Costello was to claim that the next five years would be identical to the previous five. In other words, he judged outlays against the background of a repeat of the global financial crisis and the worst sequence of natural disasters to hit our state.

Despite those massive setbacks, Labor's strategy would have returned the budget to surplus in 2014-15. The pathway to a surplus was detailed in Treasury's midyear review in December 2011. In other words, Labor's strategy is and always was on track for a surplus. It is now easy to see why Mr Costello never became Prime Minister. Being mean and tricky is second nature to him, just as it is to the government.

It is curious to note how the Premier and his ministers have been quick to condemn Labor's budget strategy. Their speed in doing so is rivalled only by the speed at which they thrust themselves in front of cameras at the opening of major infrastructure projects Labor undertook through the very same budget strategy. A case in point was last Saturday when the Premier and his transport minister were seen slapping each other on the back at the open day for the new Northern Busway. And for what? Cutting a ribbon! That was the sum total of their involvement in the project. The Premier cannot have it both ways. He cannot go around the state criticising Labor's budget strategy but then grin for the cameras at the events celebrating projects delivered under the strategy.