

Speech by


## Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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### NEWMAN GOVERNMENT

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.16 am): On behalf of the opposition and all members of this parliament, I welcome members of the deaf community to Parliament House. It is a privilege to have you here and I welcome you.

What we saw yesterday was quite incredible. We saw the whole of the Queensland cabinet undertake summer emergency training. A media release states—

The Queensland Government has taken steps to ensure it is ready for the upcoming storm and cyclone season, with a full briefing of disaster management operations today.

It may well be said that they had a full briefing of disaster management operations, because we well know—and Queenslanders well know—that there is a political storm engulfing this government. This is a political storm that keeps growing and growing, day by day. Yet the Premier of Queensland had every opportunity to shut this down early on. What would it have taken? All the Premier had to do was pick up the phone, make some calls and clarify the situation once and for all. That is all the Premier had to do. That is what leadership is all about. That is what being the Premier of the state is all about. It is about taking control—making the cabinet accountable and making sure that Queenslanders know the truth.

As I stated earlier this morning, I was very concerned to receive a piece of legal correspondence, via a law firm, from the Director-General of the Department of Transport and Main Roads. I am also informed by media reports that he is being funded by taxpayers' funds. So what we now have is a situation where taxpayers' funds are being used by the Director-General of the Department of Transport and Main Roads to send me a threatening and intimidating letter. Never in my time in this House, to my knowledge, has a director-general sent a letter of this kind to a member of parliament. This is a matter of serious contempt. No member of parliament should be intimidated or threatened by the actions of a legal firm. Nor should a member of this House be intimidated or threatened by a director-general, who is part of the executive arm of government.

As that matter is now likely to go to the Speaker for referral to the Ethics Committee, I do not want to dwell on that. But as Leader of the Opposition I will not be silenced. I believe that I have a right to raise issues in this House, to be the voice of people who are not represented in this House, to raise issues of significance, to raise issues that are of concern to people in the community, to raise issues on behalf of those 14,000 people who have been sacked on behalf of this government, to raise issues about cuts to funding services to the health portfolio and the education portfolio. I have the right not to be silenced. I have the right to continue to perform my duties not only as the Leader of the Opposition but as a member of this parliament.

What we have seen today could constitute a very serious contempt in this parliament. What have we seen today from this government? We have seen yet another diversionary tactic—another diversionary tactic—because we know that its members are engulfed in this political storm and they cannot get out of it. They do not know their way out of it, so what do they want to do? At 12 o'clock they are going to cut down the right of members of the opposition to raise matters of public importance. They are going to cut down

our right to raise matters of public importance because they want to create yet another diversion in this House because they know that there is a political storm that is engulfing their government that the Premier could solve immediately by making a few phone calls. But do we see this Premier making any phone calls trying to sort it out? What we see day by day is stories changing—stories changing by different ministers. We have been told that a particular minister was asked to contact the minister, but which minister made that contact? We still do not know. We then heard that perhaps the Attorney-General was somehow involved. This is very serious considering that the CMC reports to the Attorney-General. Why is the Attorney-General involved?

We then had another diversion last week which just came out of left field with no consultation with Queenslanders, no debate in this House, no release of environmental guidelines—that is, the decision in relation to uranium. The people of Queensland deserve better. They deserve better than what we have seen by this government. This government has made snap decisions overturning long-term Labor policy of no uranium mining in Queensland, and where is this going to lead? We already know that some federal LNP members are already talking about exploring nuclear power and going down the nuclear path. The Minister for Mines was not able to explain himself fully when questioned about this on radio programs. Where are the environmental guidelines? Once again this is another diversion. They want people to look over there, but we know what people are concerned about. They are concerned about accountability and integrity.

The people of Queensland deserve better. They are concerned about the accountability and integrity of this government. What we saw over the two weeks of the estimates committees was minister after minister come under fire, minister after minister not being across issues in their portfolios, not being able to explain their briefs, not being able to answer questions. This is a government that is under pressure. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker? Being in government is tough work. Being in government holds responsibility. When you hold the high office of a minister in government, you need to be across the issues. The people of Queensland are smart. The people of Queensland know what they are doing at the moment—that is, let us have a shining light bulb over here when the main game is about the accountability and integrity issues that are engulfing this government.

Once again, do we hear from members of the government about the 14,000 people who have lost their jobs? No, we do not. Some 14,000 people have lost their jobs. On the weekend I was able to go to Eventide to attend the rally supporting the federal member and local members about this government that does not care. This is a government that wants to shut nursing homes in this state—close them down. What about the elderly people? What about the elderly and the frail? Where are they going to go? Where are they going to live out their twilight years? This is a government that simply does not care—does not care about the people that it was elected to represent in this House. We have a health minister sitting over there who has cut services, who is cutting front-line staff and who is cutting nurses. We are being told of cuts to services in maternity hospitals across this state and yet he says, 'It's not my responsibility. It's the responsibility of the boards.' That is what he says. That is what he is going around saying. He is going around saying, 'It's the hospital boards' fault.' Let us be very clear in this House: who do the hospital boards report to? Under the legislation, they report to the minister. The Minister for Health is responsible. So do not come into this House and say, 'Not my responsibility,' because those cuts are your responsibility. They are your responsibility, health minister, and all you are doing today is a big diversion from the main picture. We will remain focused and we will not give up, because the people of Queensland deserve much better. The people of Queensland want answers. They want the truth to come out, and the truth will come out.