




Speech by
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NEWMAN GOVERNMENT

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.36 am): What we are seeing in the early days of the Newman government is what we have seen from nearly every conservative government in Australia over the past two decades. Since the election, their moves have been straight out of the mythical tory playbook, which goes a little something like this. They establish a commission of audit. This will provide the cover for the hardline economic rationalist agenda that the LNP tried to hide but that is ever so quickly rearing its head.

Even better, bring in Peter Costello—the go-to guy who was responsible during the Howard years for the attacks on the rights and jobs of working people. What better way to justify slashing and burning across government. Axe so-called ‘non-essential’ programs like the Premier’s Literary Awards and make token cuts to smaller things like tea and coffee to let people know that they mean business.

The next stage is to throw their hands up in the air and cry poor, blame the former government for everything and blame the federal government for everything else. Note that the playbook says this works even better when it is a federal Labor government. Then, lo and behold, they start slashing services and they start sacking workers. We saw it in Victoria with Kennett. Costello used the same method in Canberra when the Howard government came into power. Borbidge established the commission of audit in Queensland in 1996. We have seen it under Barry O’Farrell in New South Wales and Ted Baillieu in Victoria. They used their audits as a cloak to sack 5,000 public servants and 3,600 public servants respectively.

And now here in Queensland we have a new conservative government and what do they throw up? Another commission of audit. This new dog is unfortunately up to the same old tricks. They have gone back in time to 1993 for the Kennett audit, pulled out the leather bound tory playbook, passed down from generation to generation, wiped off the dust and slapped a big ‘can-do’ sticker on the cover.

But serving the people of Queensland demands more than this. Leadership requires more than a slogan. Legislating needs more than governing by media release. And last week we saw the Premier give the game plan away. He forgot that you are supposed to pretend not to know that the predictable audit will bring in its recommendations that will gut public sector jobs and public services. The Premier said—

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

This is a clear admission from the Premier that the LNP government has already decided what will come out of the audit. Can I say to the Premier and Treasurer that, if they are going to rely on the tory playbook, they really need to be a little less obvious about it. It is like reading a suspense novel and you already know how it ends. It is not very satisfying, particularly to the people who will be on the receiving end of the cuts.

The question the LNP government cannot answer is: why are taxpayers forking out \$3,300 a day that will simply roll out the same predictable outcomes that we have seen from new conservative governments in Queensland and other states? The LNP cannot even answer simple questions like: how many days has Mr Costello spent in Queensland for his \$3,300-a-day job? The real question is: what could \$3,300 a day buy you with a truly independent, internationally regarded consultancy firm when compared

to Peter Costello? This approach by the conservatives is so tired and so see-through that we do not even need to yell, 'The emperor has no clothes.' The LNP is not even pretending to hide the nature and purpose of this predictable audit.

We have all heard of the thousands of public sector workers who face the axe. The vast majority of these are people on temporary contracts. Agencies like Health, Disability Services and Communities have been asked to find up to 30 per cent savings in jobs. I guess this is what Tim Nicholls and Campbell Newman were thinking when they talked about 'natural attrition' and 'no forced redundancies' in the Public Service. Not renewing temporary contracts is not natural attrition; it is the equivalent of sacking someone. Temporary contracts exist for many reasons in the public sector and the people in those jobs do not consider themselves to be optional extras.

The Newman government says that it understands cost of living, but it is pretty hard to pay bills without a job. It is trying to create the false impression that Queensland has no choice about the future ahead. According to the LNP, Queensland can be saved from imagined economic destruction on one hand or have literary awards on the other. It can be about utter ruin on one hand or sacking workers on the other. But the truth about governing and the truth about managing a budget is that it is all about choices—not false contradictions set up to promote extreme conservative ideology but, rather, real choices about the priorities for the state.

The LNP government has shown its absolute hypocrisy on this issue. It is risking the livelihood of thousands of temporary workers, but it has had no problem finding the money for an extra minister; it has found money to give every LNP backbencher a pay rise, on top of the MP salary, by expanding government positions on committees; it has found the money to build the Premier his 'tower of power'; and it has found the money to pay Peter Costello \$3,300 a day.

The LNP government's position completely lacks credibility. The Costello audit is nothing more than an obvious game being played by the LNP, and the losers will be workers in the Queensland public sector and the services enjoyed by our local communities. The LNP is wasting \$3,300 a day on a report that will simply recycle the same old conservative dogma we see time and time again: set up an audit, appoint your mates, cry poor then slash and burn. Quite simply, the LNP government will use the commission of audit to back away from and squirm out of election commitments.