




Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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PUBLIC SERVICE, JOBS

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.07 pm): At 2.30 pm we will hear the Treasurer hand down a budget that breaks thousands of promises. If the Treasurer confirms the sacking of 14,000 government workers, this budget will start with the breaking of 14,000 promises. The LNP's now almost entirely discredited election policy called 'A Public Service to Serve Queensland' states—

... an LNP government will protect and revitalise front line service roles ...

When asked why this government has sacked 45 nurses in the Townsville Health District, the Premier tried to pretend that he never made this commitment, saying, 'We promised not to cut frontline services, and we're not cutting frontline services.' Whether they call them 'roles' or 'services', the clear reality is that this government has sacked front-line staff. If nurses are not considered front line by this Premier, then quite frankly I do not know who is. If this is his idea of revitalising front-line services, heaven help us if he decides to go on the attack.

This leads to the question of why this government has broken their promise to protect front-line staff, a question on which this government has been very evasive as they continue to make up their slash and burn political narrative as they go. In two separate Questions on Notice numbered 431 and 476—one to the Premier and the other to the Treasurer—we put the question to this government of whether their cuts to front-line services were to fund election promises. Both the Premier and the Treasurer failed to deny that cuts to front-line services are funding election commitments. This is because the LNP's three per cent employee expense cap was never going to work without either cuts to front-line staff or cuts to wages for government workers. The Premier and Treasurer knew this before the election, but they hid this from Queenslanders. If the Treasurer reveals that debt has reached anywhere near that projected by Treasury for the previous government, it will be further proof that the LNP's cuts are to fund election promises, not to pay down debt. We have already heard the Premier tell ABC Radio on 16 August—

... the overall debt position that we're presenting is no different to the government that's just left.

He went further to say—

... these are the Labor Party's figures—that the debt would go to \$85 billion by the 2014-15 financial year. And guess what? It will. Even though we're making these cuts, it will.

Last week we heard the Premier laugh on radio when speculating about the number of jobs he would cut, and yesterday he said that he is 'excited' about the budget. These are statements from the same Premier who said that the budget was finished two weeks ago. And detail provided to the opposition in a separate answer to a question on notice outlines how the Premier has known since 11 July that he would not need to cut 20,000 jobs. But he continued to cruelly string Queenslanders along.

This political campaign of avoiding responsibility for job cuts has permanently damaged Queensland's economy and destroyed lives. Galaxy polling has shown that 49 per cent of people in small to medium sized businesses are worried about their jobs over the next 12 months. Queensland has also recorded the largest fall in consumer sentiment, directly attributed to today's budget, as measured by the Westpac Melbourne Institute.

Last week we saw the release of the ABS national accounts, which detailed that Queensland has maintained a state final demand well ahead of the nation in the year to June. This is economic growth that has been locked in by Labor. So why are so many people fearful for their jobs in Queensland when our economy is still outpacing the country? The reason is this LNP government and its ideological obsession with talking down Queensland and making reckless cuts. Thanks to this government we now have a trend unemployment rate just 0.1 per cent below the peak it hit during the global financial crisis. There are now 7,340 more Queenslanders unemployed than in March, as measured by the ABS.

The restoration of the AAA credit rating is something Labor had a managed and sustainable plan to achieve by allowing LNG royalties to flow through to the bottom line following generational infrastructure investment—not a plan like this LNP government, which has already cost the budget more in forgone tax revenue through cuts to Skilling Queenslanders for Work than it would save in interest costs through having a AAA credit rating. This is the same LNP government that promised relief on the cost of living but underfunded its promise on electricity prices by \$160 million per year. The mean and tricky actions of this government to date indicate that this budget will be historical, as outlined by the Premier, but it will be historical for all the wrong reasons.