




Speech by

Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2012

MOTION: QUEENSLAND RAIL

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (5.39 pm): I move the following amendment—

That all words after 'House' be deleted and the following words inserted—

'notes:

- the LNP government has inherited state debt of \$65 billion and heading to \$100 billion as identified in the independent Commission of Audit report, if no policy changes were made;
- that the former Labor government sold assets without a mandate and failed to reduce debt;
- the LNP government has committed to no asset sales without a mandate and that the LNP was the only party to oppose Labor's forced privatisation; and
- that the Labor Party and Katter's Australian Party have no positive plans for Queensland to fix Queensland's finances.'

In moving this amendment, I also reflect on the motion moved by the member for Mount Isa. I know that the member for Mount Isa is relatively new to this place, but it is somewhat difficult to frame a response to the motion moved by the member for Mount Isa when it is not abundantly clear what he is talking about. After listening to the member's contribution to this debate for the past eight minutes of the 10 minutes that he was allotted, I have no greater understanding. Is the member talking about the retention of the shares that the state of Queensland owns in QR National or is he talking about the sale of QR Ltd? What is it that he means? It would help us all to have a sensible debate if the member for Mount Isa was actually able to frame his argument in some way that made sense to an existing entity in the state of Queensland, either at law or in some other way, shape or form. That has not happened.

I am assuming—and it is a big assumption and I take some care in making that assumption with the member for Mount Isa and his cohort, the member for Dalrymple—that they are talking about Queensland Rail Ltd, that is, the remaining asset that is owned by the people of Queensland and administered by the Minister for Transport and Main Roads and me as shareholding ministers. I am assuming that that is what he is talking about.

Mr Knuth interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: In fact, I hear the member for Dalrymple saying, 'That's what the motion says.' That is not what the motion says. The motion says 'Queensland Rail'. It does not say 'Queensland Rail Ltd', it does not say 'QR National'; it does not say what it is. If the member had some sense of what he was talking about, we would be able to respond.

Let us turn to the nub of the matter. The reality is that the LNP government has inherited \$65 billion of debt. That is the position as at 30 June 2012. Even the member for Mulgrave has to admit that that is the number. I think we have him over the line so far. It has been a little difficult—it has taken only four or five months—but I think we have him there. That debt would be heading to \$100 billion if there had been no policy changes, which is what we have constantly said. If the member does not believe that, he is a denier, but I think we are going to get there. We have the Commission of Audit, we have Moody's, we have Doug McTaggart. I think we might get him there. I am hopeful, but I would not be putting the house on it.

Mr Newman: Give him time.

Mr NICHOLLS: I am giving him time. We are going through an education process. It is taking a long while.

In terms of that debt number and the deficit and the devastation of the loss of the AAA credit rating, not only is it the incoming Treasury brief, not only is it the independent Commission of Audit, not only is it Moody's Investors Service, but it is that impeccable source of financial wisdom and advice, the former member for Greenslopes, Cameron Dick, who also said, 'I think we got it wrong. We didn't realise the Queensland electorate's attachment to the AAA credit rating and we didn't realise what the debt and deficit would mean.' So not only is it the three independent sources, there is also even someone from their own side. Maybe—just maybe—the seven remaining members of the Labor Party will finally accept that they got it wrong the last time.

Mr Newman: He's coming back. He's making Desley swap.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is right; he is coming back. The plot was to come back and take over South Brisbane. He has moved on to Woodridge now.

If we do not do anything about it, the debt gets larger and larger. The member for Mount Isa walks in here without a knowledge of the history of this place. Seventy-three days after being re-elected in 2009, it was the Labor Party that stood up and offered for sale the five assets of the people of Queensland and the one party that opposed them was the LNP. The one party that took the government to 5 am in the morning, when the government truncated debate, was the LNP. The two people who led that debate were the Deputy Premier and me as the shadow Treasurer. We fought it the whole way. The people of Queensland relied on us to fight it and we did. We went to the people of Queensland at the last election saying, 'No asset sales without a mandate.' I say to the member for Mount Isa that that remains our position.