




Speech By  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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**MOTION: UNEMPLOYMENT**

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House:

- notes that our state's trend jobless rate for July of 6.1 per cent is higher than the 5.5 per cent rate in March 2012;
- notes that, in trend terms, there are now 4,700 fewer full-time jobs in Queensland than in March 2012;
- notes that jobs growth in 2012-13 was the weakest since the 1990-91 recession; and
- acknowledges that the Premier and Treasurer committed at the March 2012 election to reduce Queensland's unemployment rate to four per cent within six years.

Earlier this month the Treasurer issued a press release describing the ABS labour force figures for July as 'pleasing', despite there being a loss of full-time jobs on a trend basis and no jobs growth in that month. Instead the Treasurer pointed to a revision in seasonally adjusted figures from the previous month to claim that Queensland's employment conditions are 'strong'.

This Newman government's policies of slashing and burning have contributed to the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate increasing from 5.5 per cent at the time of the election to a decade high in June of 6.3 per cent. This was after the LNP promised at the time of the election to have the jobless rate tracking down to four per cent over six years. For the Premier and Treasurer to then take credit for the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate falling slightly to 5.9 per cent in July is beyond belief. It seems as if this LNP government—as well as the Premier and Treasurer—are proud of unemployment being around half a per cent higher on either measure than they were when they were elected.

So what are the facts? The facts are that the trend unemployment rate has increased from 5.5 per cent at the time of the election to 6.1 per cent under Campbell Newman. As I just outlined, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate also increased from 5.5 per cent at the time of the election to 5.9 per cent in July. On a trend basis there are 4,700 fewer full-time jobs in Queensland in July than at the time of the election. That is 4,700 fewer full-time jobs to go around in Queensland, with more than 113,000 additional people now living here.

While the Premier and Treasurer consistently seek to blame the carbon tax and the federal government, Australia as a whole has created 68,800 full-time jobs since the election according to the ABS. That is 68,800 full-time jobs created in Australia despite the loss of 4,700 full-time jobs in Queensland. The last time I checked, the federal government's policies were not exclusive to Queensland. For the LNP to wash their hands of any responsibility is unacceptable.

This Newman government has axed more than 17,000 full-time equivalent positions, with the Premier still refusing to detail the full extent of the job losses. This is despite supposed commitments to openness and transparency. The Newman government also axed Skilling Queenslanders for

Work—an employment program that was more than paying for itself and supported 26,000 Queenslanders into work each year.

It is not just the opposition saying this. The Commonwealth Bank have said it. CommSec have said it. Deloitte Access Economics have said it. The Newman government's slash and burn approach has slowed the Queensland economy. Just prior to the election the Queensland Treasurer was describing an economy growing at four per cent, with unemployment at 5.5 per cent and record private investment as a 'basket case'. Now with unemployment higher, economic growth slower at three per cent and business investment forecast to contract over the next three years, we are being told that this is 'solid', 'pleasing' and 'great'.

This morning the Treasurer accused Labor of talking down the economy, yet when conditions were better the Premier said Queensland was on a 'power dive into the abyss'. The fact is the Premier and his co-pilot—the member for Clayfield—were at the controls when the economy slowed significantly, not Labor.

**Ms Trad:** His wingman.

**Mr PITT:** I take that interjection from the member for South Brisbane.

The unemployment rate is not forecast to recover to the yearly average recorded under the previous government for another two years. That is another two years of higher unemployment, despite the LNP promising at the election to lower the unemployment rate. The Premier estimated before the election that around 420,000 jobs would need to be created by 2017-18 to meet his four per cent target. Based on Treasury's current projections for employment growth, this estimate would indicate that more than 152,000 jobs will need to be created in just that single final year to meet the LNP's four per cent unemployment target.

These are not my figures and forecasts. These are Queensland Treasury's figures and Queensland Treasury's forecasts prepared for an LNP government. Treasury calculates that taxes per person have increased by \$257 under the LNP. That equates to \$1,000 for the average household of four. This is despite their promises to lower the cost of living by \$250 to \$330 per household.

The July labour force figures follow a financial year in which employment growth was weakest in percentage terms since 1990-91 at 0.3 per cent. This is the weakest jobs creation result for Queensland in percentage terms since the Australian economy was last in recession. Once again these are Queensland Treasury's figures from their website, not mine.

The Treasurer may well seek to cherry pick his own figures or perhaps make some jokes about Paul Keating, as he did during the estimates hearing, but this is a serious issue impacting on Queenslanders. The last time the trend unemployment rate was this high under Labor was December 2003. There are also 15,800 more unemployed Queenslanders since the election on a trend basis.

The participation rate, as we have noted before, has also fallen by one per cent trend and 0.9 per cent seasonally adjusted since the election. That means the percentage of Queenslanders out there looking for work has fallen—that people are simply giving up looking for work. If the same proportion of Queenslanders were looking for work now as at the time of the election, the unemployment rate on either measure would now be in excess of seven per cent. That is a shameful position.

The Treasurer will likely contribute to this debate by talking about total jobs growth since the election which includes part-time jobs growth—something the Treasurer has, I would dare to say, little credibility on—after having carried on in this parliament ad nauseum about breadwinners and jobs of just one hour a week. As we all know, that is a measure that the Howard government made famous.

In any event, total trend jobs growth under the LNP is so far tracking at less than half what it was under the previous government. At this point in the cycle, Labor had supported the creation of 36,900 overall jobs on a trend basis, compared with 12,800 under the LNP. Jobs growth under the LNP is so far tracking at 35 per cent of what it was under Labor. These jobs were created throughout the economy and supported stronger wages in the private sector.

The RBA statement on monetary policy released this month highlighted a sharp fall in wage growth particular to Queensland reflecting the higher unemployment rate. These job losses not only impact on those who are now out of work but also impact on the cost of living for families across Queensland.

Last financial year, as the Treasurer spent \$2 million advertising his Great Start Grant, dwelling investment was in recession—contracting by two per cent over 2012-13 according to the budget papers. This was despite a fall in interest rates of 75 basis points over this period. If you are without a job or facing uncertainty about your future wages, you are less likely to buy a new house.

It is worth also debunking here today the LNP's work of fiction that the previous government hired public servants to achieve jobs growth. The Premier says the government needs to reduce our Public Service to be smaller like Western Australia. This is despite the final Costello report stating that the previous government left Queensland with fewer public servants per person than Western Australia, even though our state's population is more decentralised. Perhaps the Premier missed this when he supposedly read the Costello report or, should I say, finally read the Costello report, just as he made up a claim that the government was borrowing to pay the wages of 20,000 public servants.

Public sector wages as a percentage of Queensland's total recurrent revenue is actually higher under the LNP at 39.6 per cent last financial year compared with 38.9 per cent under the previous government. Expenditure on wages is expected to track even higher to 40.2 per cent under the LNP by 2016-17. The LNP have not used their attack on jobs and the economy to pay down debt. Instead it has been used to pay for their \$4 billion in unfunded promises. The debt to revenue ratio is peaking higher under this LNP government than was projected under the previous Labor government. Net debt has already increased by \$7.58 billion under the LNP and general government net debt is tracking \$634 million higher next financial year than projected under the previous government. The Newman government has contributed to rising unemployment and a slowing of Queensland's economy. The elements put forward in my motion are undisputable facts. There is no imputation. There is no politics. And I table the sources to prove it.

*Table paper:* Private member's motion moved by the member for Mulgrave regarding unemployment [\[3255\]](#).

No amount of bluster or rhetoric can cover up these facts. The Newman government needs to stop denying these facts, but then again why let the facts get in the way of a good story! Those opposite must stop denying that trend unemployment is at decade highs in Queensland, that their record is of the worst jobs growth in more than two decades and that unemployment is higher under this government. They must stop denying that the economy has slowed under the LNP's watch and is not forecast to recover for another two years.

The Newman LNP government has no chance of responding to the higher unemployment and slower economic growth that they have absolutely contributed to if they fail to accept this reality in the first place. I say again that these are facts. There is no politics involved. Government members should start today by supporting this motion as it stands.