




Speech By
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MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Newman Government, Performance

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (11.30 am): When the Newman government was elected it promised to be more 'open and accountable'. By the end of last year a Galaxy poll found that nearly half of Queenslanders believed that this promise had been broken, with nearly two-thirds polled saying the LNP's ethical behaviour was worse than that of the previous government. If it was bad then, things have since become worse.

Since being elected the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Treasurer have met with casino proponents, such as James Packer's Crown Resorts, to discuss the granting of new casino licenses without having established any probity process or having appointed a probity adviser. The Treasurer even accepted hospitality from an interested party—the Echo Entertainment Group—while engaging in these discussions.

At the estimates hearings this year the Deputy Premier defended the lack of any probity adviser by claiming that no decision had been made about the granting of a new casino licence. However, prior to the estimates hearings the Deputy Premier had said in response to meetings with proponents, 'I think it's time we got down to some formal negotiation.' When referring to a signature development for the Brisbane CBD he said, 'It's almost impossible for that sort of development without inclusion of a casino, without involvement of some big players, so we are starting to talk to those players.'

So the first failure of probity was for the Deputy Premier to not appoint a probity adviser before commencing these negotiations. At the end of last month a probity adviser was finally appointed for the redevelopment of the government precinct, including the approval of a casino licence—none other than 'independent' Mr Len Scanlan, with BDO appointed as the probity consultant. The same 'independent' Len Scanlan was paid by the LNP to do their 2012 state election costings, which resulted in the sacking of around 20,000 workers to meet their so-called funding source of an expenditure cap. The same 'independent' Len Scanlan was paid by the LNP to do their 2013 federal election costings. The same 'independent' Len Scanlan was the head of internal audit of Queensland Health during the period of the fake Tahitian prince.

It is highly questionable for a government to appoint someone who is a known paid consultant for their political party to be a so-called 'independent' probity adviser on such a significant decision. The Deputy Premier would have done well to check the Australian National Audit Office better practice guide on probity which lists both 'secondary employment commitments' and 'specific future employment prospects' as personal interests that may give rise to a conflict of interest. It will be interesting to see if Mr Scanlan is again selected to sign off on the LNP's election costings at the next state election.

Now, let us look at the appointment of the probity consultant business consulting firm BDO. BDO was also paid by the LNP to do its election costings for the Brisbane City Council last year. The

same BDO firm also donated \$62,850 to the LNP over the last two years, with no donations to the ALP over this period. Of these donations from BDO to the LNP, more than \$50,000 was received since the second half of last year. This Newman LNP government simply does not understand what probity, proper process or running an honest government is about. It is second nature for this LNP government to engage in cash for access lunches, cash for access deals and, as we will see this week, cash for legislation deals.

This is a government that does not govern in the interests of Queenslanders or democracy. While they might not be good at looking out for the interests of Queenslanders, they are good at lining their party's coffers with a massive \$8.5 million collected over the first six months of this year. Many of these same donors are now winning big contracts from this government's ideological agenda of outsourcing, regardless of whether it saves taxpayers' money or delivers better outcomes for Queenslanders.

Whenever the next election arrives, the choice for Queenslanders will be clear. It will be a choice between a fee-for-service Newman government that governs in the interests of its business donors and mates or a renewed Labor Party that will represent the average Queensland family. Queenslanders deserve answers from this government as to whether they will lift the moratorium on poker machines as part of their plan for more casinos. It is simply not good enough to announce that three new casino licences will be issued without any economic modelling or any detail of what this will mean.

For the record, yet again, can I say that, despite rumours started by some to the contrary, I support the proposed \$4.2 billion investment for the Aquis integrated resort development in Far North Queensland. I support the potential positive impacts it may have on our region. I am simply asking questions that I think are important to ask. In stark contrast, this government wishes to not answer questions. They need to remember that while they may remain arrogant, they will not always remain so unaccountable and they must respect proper democratic process and proper probity. Queenslanders expect more from their government. Sadly, what we have seen from this LNP is a massive error in judgement on numerous occasions.