



Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

MOTION: UNEMPLOYMENT

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (5.45 pm): I move—

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

- notes the Newman government inherited an unsustainable fiscal position from the former Labor government;
- notes the Newman government is making Queensland the best place in Australia for business to invest, employ and grow;
- notes that since coming to office the government has created 13,000 jobs in trend terms and more than 20,000 jobs in seasonally adjusted terms;
- notes that for the last 10 months trend employment in Queensland has increased or remained stable; and
- notes the Newman government's efforts to reach its target to reduce unemployment to four per cent within six years.

What a tale of gloom, woe and sorrow sold by those opposite. You would think, Mr Deputy Speaker, that they wanted to live in Tasmania. You would think that they would actually like to transfer to Greece because all they can do is talk down the Queensland economy. What they fail to do is acknowledge their past. Like alcoholics, the first thing that needs to be done is you need to acknowledge you have a problem. Like ongoing alcoholics, they continue to fail to acknowledge their addiction to debt and deficit.

It is only the Labor Party in this state—it is only the Labor Party, I suspect, in the Western world—that continues to deny that they left Queensland in an unsustainable financial position. I take the opportunity to again remind the House of the statements that were made in relation to the legacy left behind by Labor. Let's go through it again one more time. I know my colleagues have heard it and I keep saying it because it is important that Queenslanders keep hearing it. The independent officers of Treasury, in the incoming Queensland government brief, warned—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr NICHOLLS: This is what they said—

Queensland's fiscal position and outlook is unsustainable and restoration must be an urgent priority for this term of government.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation, the bankers, said—

The State's debt has reached unprecedented levels. Together with its published forward estimates showing an even greater volume of debt required, Queensland is now in uncharted waters with respect to the volume of debt on issue and the resultant interest bill.

More recently, these views were verified by Queensland's Labor appointed Auditor-General. On page 35 of his report *Queensland state government financial statements 2011-12* he said—

Borrowings by the GGS—

general government sector—

have grown by 338.5 per cent between 2008 and 2012.

He went on to say—

The increase in borrowings over this time has increased risks to the long-term financial sustainability of the state ...

To top it all off, the independent Commission of Audit said—

In recent years, the Government of Queensland embarked on an unsustainable level of spending which has jeopardised the financial position of the State.

Queensland has moved from a position of considerable financial strength just six years ago to a position of weakness today. Its performance has been worse than the other states over that period.

There you have it: four independent sources, none of them this government—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr NICHOLLS:—all of whom have condemned the failures of the former Labor administration and yet those on that side of the House refuse to admit that they got it wrong. Their own former Attorney-General even admitted that they got it wrong when he said, 'We didn't take into account Queenslanders' desire to retain their AAA credit rating.' They used debt to fuel an uncontrollable rise in recurrent expenditure in government. The number of public servants increased from 146,000 at June 2000 to over 206,000 a decade later in June 2011—an increase of 60,000—and the government wages bill went from \$8.2 billion to over \$20 billion in 2011. But did they actually deliver better services for Queenslanders? That is the question.

Mr Pitt: Yes.

Mr NICHOLLS: 'Yes,' says the member for Mulgrave, who was happy with the delivery of services by the health department, who sat in a government under whom the term 'ambulance ramping' became synonymous with a failure to drive administration and whose former Premier in this place said of the health department that it needed to be destroyed in order to be rebuilt. That is what they did. Interest on debt was the fastest growing component of expenditure.

We have stopped the rot. We have capped the debt and we are working to deliver economic growth in Queensland. We are delivering red-tape reduction through the Assistant Minister for Finance and Regulatory Reform. We are continuing to keep the cost of living down. We have delivered on our promises to do that. Nonetheless, the opposition continues to deny reality as we go for a four per cent growth target.