




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Newman Government, Achievements

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (9.45 am): Last night Kevin Rudd again confirmed that he will say or do anything to save his own job and the jobs of his Labor mates. In the people's debate, which occurred last night just down the road at the Broncos Leagues Club in Red Hill, he claimed that the Newman government had not been upfront with its plans when it went to the 2012 election. As we all know, the Newman government took a comprehensive, costed platform to the people of Queensland and the people of Queensland voted overwhelmingly for a change. We costed our policies. More than that, in our first budget we set out and fully detailed our commitments and the cost of delivering those commitments. We were as close to our figures as made no difference.

Upon coming to government we also received dire warnings from independent experts and the Treasury officials about the state of the government's finances. However, we did not cut and run from our policies and our principles like Labor would have. We rolled up our sleeves and got on with one of the biggest reform agendas in recent memory.

As I stand here today, I can tell honourable members what we have done. We have charted a course to stabilise debt, and the forecast level of borrowings at 30 June 2015 is expected to be \$6.2 billion lower than the comparable estimate in the independent Commission of Audit's interim report and \$5.2 billion lower than that forecast by the previous government in its 2011-12 midyear update. That means we are saving \$750 million in interest, and that is money we can use to deliver front-line services.

We have had to refocus resources to ensure that the government is living within its means and is not a drain on Queensland households. However, we did not sack 14,000 workers, as claimed by Kevin Rudd. We put in place a voluntary redundancy process for 9,200 employees in order to right-size the Public Service, which grew by over 60,000 employees in 10 years under the former Labor government. Unfortunately, the increase in the size of that Public Service was not matched by a commensurate increase in services for Queenslanders. We saw that in the independent Commission of Audit report. We saw that in the health department. We saw that in the police department and we saw that in the cost of living, which spiralled under Labor.

The Newman government has delivered \$1.4 billion worth of measures to ease the cost of living. At the same time Commonwealth Labor has introduced a job-destroying carbon tax, which has added \$100 to the electricity bill of an average Queensland household and wiped over a billion dollars of value from Queensland assets. We have delivered record funding for Health of \$12.3 billion this year alone. At the same time, Labor's federal budget included a cut in Health funding of almost \$500 million over the forward estimates—the equivalent funding for 5,000 nurses, but we have not heard the Nurses Union talk about that. This was on top of the \$103 million cut in December last year, which included a retrospective cut of \$40 million for services that had already been delivered.

We have committed to providing an initial \$868 million over the period to 2018-19 to address the historical underfunding of disability services in Queensland and to support implementing the NDIS in Queensland, something that our predecessors never did. I take this opportunity to note again that, during this year's budget debate, the Labor members in this House voted against a sustainable funding source to deliver the NDIS in Queensland.

We have also boosted education spending to \$11.4 billion—another record—including our \$537 million flagship program Great Teachers = Great Results. Our program is more than a hollow slogan as Labor's is. It will deliver professional excellence in teaching and increase the autonomy of our schools. In federal Labor's last Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook it cut \$400 million of specific-purpose payments and national partnership agreements for education in Queensland, and many more remain in jeopardy. We have also committed another \$300 million to address the school maintenance backlog left by Labor, and we have gone to market for the construction and delivery of 10 new state schools.

It is not just about spending. We are modernising the way services are delivered in Queensland, and we are striving to make the Queensland Public Service the best in Australia. Already we have banned ambulance bypass and implemented strategies to improve ambulance access to hospital emergency departments. We have also put an end to ambulance ramping, which grew rampant under the Beattie and Bligh Labor governments.

Kevin Rudd and his Labor mates keep talking down Queensland for their own self-interest. They do not care about Queensland; they care about themselves. The Newman government has full confidence in where Queensland is headed. There is much to look forward to in our great state of Queensland, and we will continue working hard every day to make Queensland the best place to invest, employ and grow. But we will not stand by and let Kevin Rudd, aided and abetted by his Labor mates in this place, his underlings here in Queensland, keep peddling these mistruths and falsehoods. We will be telling the people of Queensland and the people of Australia that Queensland is the best place to invest, employ and grow.