



Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszcuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Record of Proceedings, 4 June 2014

MOTION: COST OF LIVING, SENIORS AND PENSIONERS



Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.41 pm): I move—

That all words after concessions be deleted and the following words inserted:

1. Notes that the Newman government had the opportunity to make up the federal shortfall in pensioner concessions when it brought down its 2014-15 budget just 24 hours ago,
2. Notes that the Newman government failed to support the Opposition's motion in this house on May 6 calling on the Premier and Treasurer to stand up to Tony Abbott's cuts, and
3. Calls on the Newman government to abandon its multi-million dollar Strong Choices political advertising campaign and immediately redirect the funds to help pensioners.

The clear message out of the budget handed down yesterday by the Treasurer, Tim Nicholls, is that the pensioners across Queensland are hurting. The pensioners, those people who have worked hard all of their lives and who struggle week to week to make ends meet, are hurting. Why are they hurting? They are hurting because this government does not care. Campbell Newman, the Premier of this state, and the LNP government simply do not care about the pensioners in this state.

I was proud to go out to Inala today and meet with the pensioners of Inala. These pensioners were meeting to discuss a number of issues but, more importantly, were fundraising to combat cancer in this state. While the LNP was holding their big lunch with the big end of town—fundraising for their political coffers—the people of Inala were fundraising for cancer research in this state.

The pensioners are hurting. They are hurting because this government has axed their concessions. What does that mean? Let us put it in perspective so no-one can be under any illusion about what that means for the pensioners across this state. It means higher electricity prices, higher gas prices, higher public transport prices. That is what it means to pensioners across this state. This government has done absolutely nothing to alleviate their pain.

I was out there listening to what the pensioners had to say. What did they say about this government? I am happy to tell the House some of the things they said. They were that 'this government is lousy', 'this Premier does not understand', 'this Premier does not care about us'. They told me, 'Get him out here and we'll tell him what we think about them.' They said that this government is out of touch. If they are saying that in Inala, they are saying it right across the state. I will be out there every day for the next few months talking to pensioners across Queensland about how this government failed to stand up to Tony Abbott and has failed to deliver for the pensioners across this state.

We are told that this Strong Choices advertising campaign is costing Queensland taxpayers up to \$20 million. I want to know the full facts. Is this government spending up to \$20 million on their Strong Choices advertising blitz? No sooner had the Treasurer handed down the budget and there were ads in the paper. When I was driving out to Inala these ads were playing on the radio. Why is this government spending all of this money on this campaign when they could have quite easily redirected that money into alleviating the burden on pensioners?

What this government is doing is absolutely smashing the pensioners in this state. I cannot wait until every member of this House gets back to their electorates and listens to what the pensioners

have to say. I know that my office at Inala has been inundated with calls today from pensioners concerned about this arrogant, out-of-touch government, with a Premier, a Treasurer and a Deputy Premier who simply do not care. They are so out of touch that they think it is okay to spend up to \$20 million, I am told, on an advertising campaign and not redirect that money to the people who are hurting the most.

Then we had the mock outrage of the Premier coming in here today and saying that they are going to stand up to Tony Abbott in Canberra. This budget document was printed before the budget was handed down. People only need to go to the concession statement to see quite clearly that Queensland's senior card holders will lose up to \$54.2 million in 2014-15 and \$233.2 million over four years.

For goodness sake, this cabinet is supposed to be running the state. Did anybody in the cabinet not stand up and say that this is going to have a massive impact on our pensioners? Where was the Minister for Communities? What did she say? What did the Deputy Premier say in cabinet? They did nothing. They should hang their heads in shame. They did absolutely nothing.

Now I turn back to the document that every Queenslanders should keep at the next state election. That is Campbell Newman's contract with Queensland. Their contract with Queensland will come back to haunt every single LNP member in this House. What did it say? Very clearly it said that they would 'lower the cost of living'. Well go and tell the pensioners of Queensland how you are lowering their cost of living. Those opposite are all quiet now.

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Pause the clock! I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pensioners are hurting. This government does not care and it is about time the government did something to fix their budget mess and help alleviate the pain for pensioners. The first thing they can do is abandon their Strong Choices campaign and redirect the funding.

We know that Tony Abbott has copied Campbell Newman. He has used Campbell Newman as his role model on how to go about cuts to services and cuts to jobs, and the people of Queensland are going to remember all of this come the next election. Do not think for a moment they are going to forget the up to 20,000 jobs cut across this state. Do not think for a moment they are going to forget how the government made people at Eventide and Moreton Bay Nursing Care Unit leave their homes, homes where they had lived. They should have had the dignity of a quality of life to the end of their life, and this government turfed them out in their hour of need. Now they turn their attack on the pensioners of this state.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock. There are too many interjections in the chamber. I call the Leader of the Opposition.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Madam Speaker, I do not think it is any clearer than going to the Australian and to an article by well-respected journalist Michael McKenna, and the headline to that article was 'Copy me: Newman to Abbott'. That is exactly what Abbott is doing—copying Campbell Newman. To stand here in this House and say, 'I am going to stand up to Tony Abbott'—well, do you know what? Queenslanders do not believe it, because we had a motion here before the federal budget came down and the LNP members failed to address it.

What Campbell Newman has done is he has raised the white flag to Tony Abbott. He has rolled over and he has surrendered. If the government were serious about pensioners, they would have sorted the mess out before budget day. To come in here with mock outrage, with feigned outrage, about Tony Abbott and what he has been doing is absolutely disgraceful. What Campbell Newman should be doing is getting out there and mixing with real people. Get out there and meet with pensioners. I am quite sure there are some pensioners in Ashgrove who can tell him a thing or two. Get out there, meet with people, listen to what people have to say—

Mr Mulherin: They're supposed to be a grown-up government.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I take that interjection from the deputy leader. This is not a grown-up government because a grown-up government would act by treating their pensioners with dignity and respect. They would not be handing down a budget that will impact on their quality of life when they have to start paying higher electricity prices, higher gas prices—

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order, members! Pause the clock.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—and higher public transport costs. They should hang their heads in shame. This is a sad day for Queensland when the pensioners of our state have to suffer.

(Time expired)