



Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Strong Choices Campaign

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (2.35 pm): Queenslanders have shown that they are hugely interested in discussing ways to pay down Labor's \$80 billion worth of debt which has been accumulated over the last 10 years.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: I notice you can't make a comment about that. I speak of Labor's \$80 billion worth of debt and it would have been Labor's \$85 billion worth of debt. In fact, it probably would have been Labor's \$90 billion worth of debt had this government not taken strong action to rein in the deficit and bring the state's finances back into the black.

In the past two days alone I have spoken to more than 12,000 Queenslanders in regional Queensland about their priorities and the strong choices the government faces to pay down debt and fund the roads, rail, hospitals and schools of the future. We have done that through virtual town hall meetings for the Gladstone and Wide Bay areas. Tonight I will be speaking with the Mount Isa region in the same way as we continue our adult conversation with the people of Queensland about the choices that we all face if we are to fix the mess created by those opposite and as we attempt to deal with the \$80 billion worth of Labor debt.

The Strong Choices campaign has given all Queenslanders an unprecedented opportunity to have their say on an unprecedented problem. Since beginning the Strong Choices conversation, more than 43,000 Queenslanders have used the People's Budget tool to make their submission and the Strong Choices website has received more than 186,000 unique visits. The People's Budget tool has helped Queenslanders get a thorough understanding of the options we face as we seek to pay down debt. We can significantly increase fees, taxes and charges, we can reduce services or we can consider the sale or lease of some assets.

Before the government decides on a plan, I am making sure that we have heard from everyone who wants to contribute to the mature debate about the best way to deal with the accumulated Labor debt legacy from the past 10 years, amounting to over \$80 billion. Accordingly, today I am pleased to inform the House that I will be adding another Strong Choices community forum to our already extensive list, with a meeting in Charleville on Friday, 16 May, to discuss securing Queensland's future. While it may come as a complete and utter galloping shock to the members opposite, I have found that people all over Queensland genuinely want to hear about the condition of our state's finances and discuss the choices confronting us. Particularly, they ask how we could have \$80 billion worth of Labor debt. They want to know what can be done to free up funds for vital infrastructure projects, and I expect the people of Charleville will be no different. As a government, we want to be able to invest in that infrastructure to support a growing economy because that will deliver Queenslanders more jobs and greater prosperity wherever they are in the state.

I would encourage any Queenslander who wants to have their say to visit the Strong Choices website and make a submission to government so that we understand their priorities as we look to fix the accumulated Labor debt of the last decade.