




Speech By
Hon. Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 20 May 2014

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Strong Choices Campaign

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (9.47 am): The Strong Choices campaign has given all Queenslanders an unprecedented opportunity to have their say on an unprecedented problem. At midnight last night submissions closed for the people's budget. The results show that Queenslanders clearly do want to be engaged in the strong choices we all face as we look to pay down the accumulated \$80 billion of debt of the last decade. More than 57,000 people made submissions at the Strong Choices website, which received more than a quarter of a million unique views. As part of my state-wide listening tour, I also engaged directly with more than 20,000 Queenslanders. The government has always believed that Queenslanders deserve to be fully informed about their state's finances. That is why we launched the Strong Choices campaign: to help Queenslanders understand this unprecedented debt challenge and how it threatens our future prosperity.

The people's budget has been a key part of this campaign. This was an Australian-first interactive tool which has given Queenslanders the chance to tell the government their spending and saving priorities for the future. This government understands there are no easy or popular options, but we also know that strong choices have to be made to reduce Labor's \$80 billion debt to a sustainable level, as recommended by the independent Queensland Commission of Audit as well as the independent officers of Queensland Treasury and the Queensland Treasury Corporation.

As highlighted through the campaign, the government has a limited range of choices to reduce debt, and they are: to significantly increase fees, taxes and charges; to substantially reduce or cut services; or to sell or lease some public assets. The government will collate the feedback we have received and we will deliver a methodical, disciplined and constructive plan about how we intend to secure this state's future prosperity through paying down debt. As I have indicated, our draft plan will be released for consultation through the budget process. Not everyone will agree with all of the strong choices we make about how to pay for the things into the future, but at least Queenslanders will know that we have funding certainty so we can invest in the things we need for a growing and ageing population such as schools, roads and hospitals.

We will not be a government that leaves a debt mess for our children and grandchildren to fix. We are prepared to make these strong choices because Queenslanders deserve nothing less than a strong and prosperous future. This government has a plan for Queensland, a strong plan, to build a four-pillar economy and restore the state's finances. A brighter future is ours for the taking but only under an LNP government with a strong plan for a bright future.