




Speech By
Christopher Whiting

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Record of Proceedings, 2 June 2015

MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Queensland Economy

 **Mr WHITING** (Murrumba—ALP) (12.22 pm): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House the rise in consumer confidence in recent months in Queensland. A great example of the growing consumer confidence in the Queensland economy is the announcement of a major addition to the Westfield suite of retail buildings at North Lakes, which lies at the heart of the Murrumba electorate. Westfield will build a \$110 million megamall at North Lakes. I welcome it and look forward to seeing it alongside Ikea. The megamall project will deliver an extra 159 local businesses into our community and, most importantly, it will mean an extra 700 jobs.

In looking at rising consumer confidence in 2015, it is no wonder that a major player in retail such as Westfield is prepared to make a substantial investment in our state. North Lakes is an outstanding community, and this project means that our community will be in a great position to take advantage of the growing economic confidence in our great state under the Palaszczuk government.

Let me outline the economic indicators we have recently seen. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, we have the strongest real retail growth of any mainland Australian state in the March quarter. Queensland consumer confidence has hit an 18-month high in May according to the Westpac-Melbourne Institute Survey of Consumer Sentiment. Queensland recorded the second highest rise in consumer confidence of any Australian mainland state. The National Australia Bank survey showed that Queensland's trend rate for business confidence was plus five points in April.

The ABS figures show how Queensland's housing sector is getting stronger. New dwellings investment in Queensland increased in the March 2015 quarter to the highest level since February 2008. Investor housing finance for the purchase of existing dwellings totalled \$4 billion in the March quarter. Investor finance commitments for the construction of new dwellings rose to \$625 million. It is clear that this consumer confidence is being reflected in the real estate industry.

I talked with Gina Wells, the principal of Raine & Horne at Burpengary-Narangba, the day before yesterday. The agency has had a record two months selling 42 properties worth \$16 million in sales. It is booming, as she says. Add to this the news that McDonald's has announced a major investment that will create up to 3,000 new jobs in Queensland. The investment will pump around \$55 million into the Queensland economy. Contrast this growing consumer confidence with the dire economic outlook in the last six months of the Campbell LNP government. We know on this side of the House that this plunge in economic confidence we saw in that time was no surprise. The cuts to jobs and services by the Campbell Newman LNP government had a big impact on consumer confidence. When you rip 24,000 jobs out of the economy, you send consumer confidence downward at a rate of knots. When people are fearful about whether they will have a job tomorrow or wonder if they have to be the sole breadwinner or if they have to look after one of their kids in the household when he loses his job, they stop buying.

Consumer confidence was weakened by these cuts to jobs and services, and this came home most forcefully to me when I was doorknocking in North Lakes during the campaign. On one street I talked to a woman whose company supplied medical products to neonatal units in Queensland Health. Her company's business had been halved due to funding cuts. Queensland Health had cut back on buying them due to funding cuts. Two streets away was a woman who worked for a company that provided linen to Queensland Health. Queensland Health had drastically reduced how much linen they purchased due to cuts. She told me about 40 per cent of their staff had been let go as a result of this.

Mr Watts: They were running so well last time you were in government.

Mr WHITING: I will tell you what worked really well for you guys—the first Hockey budget. It was a shocker and it evaporated consumer confidence overnight. The first Hockey budget hit the local real estate market hard. The week that it was brought down buyers stopped coming through the door. They stopped buying houses. Like coffee shops, real estate agencies are an immediate barometer of consumer confidence. If your policies make people fearful for their job, they will shut their wallets and walk away. Thankfully, the latest indicators show that consumer confidence in Queensland is increasing under the Palaszczuk Labor government. I congratulate the Premier and the Treasurer, who are focused on growing the economy and growing jobs in this great state.