




Speech By  
**Hon. Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer, Minister for Employment and Industrial Relations and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.17 pm): I certainly congratulate the member for Ashgrove on such a heartfelt speech. It really is telling the journey that she has gone through, like so many others have gone through, with having been here before and having returned. I can certainly say that from my family's experience. My father left this place twice, one time of his choosing and one time not of his choosing. I wear his parliamentary mace that all members wear when they leave this place as a mark of respect for the work that he did. I also started wearing it because, frankly, most of the people I knew whom I used to serve with got one. I started wearing it in the last term to remind me that nobody is a political immortal. Everyone has an end date. All of us are dispensable. While we are here we serve at the absolute pleasure of our constituents and the people of Queensland.

I firstly want to congratulate all the newly elected members of this place on both sides of the aisle. I am sure that the opening week seems like such a long time ago—a distant memory—such is the time that has elapsed since the Governor's address. Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Nicklin on his elevation to the Speaker of this House and you on becoming the Deputy Speaker. They are important offices, as are most of the offices in the parliament.

I want to thank the very good people of Mulgrave for their continued support and faith in me to be their representative in this House. It is an enormous privilege to represent my local electorate in this place. It is a responsibility that I do not take lightly, nor do I take lightly the office that I now hold as the state's Treasurer. I thank the Premier and my colleagues for their faith in me to manage our \$300 billion economy and oversee our more than \$50 million annual budget. I will use the first part of my reply to address the amendments put forward by the member for Southern Downs which I and every other member of this government will be opposing. We are an open, transparent and accountable government when it comes to fiscal accountability and reporting. The Palaszczuk government has and will continue to uphold the integrity of the Queensland Treasury. Last term the LNP increased the state's debt by over \$14 billion and now the member for Southern Downs wants his own personal report on how we will pay it off. His hypocrisy is astounding. The member for Southern Downs spent his budget estimates time attacking the member for Bundamba and showed no interest in our balanced and measured Queensland budget.

Let us take a moment to look back at the last parliament. Those opposite did everything they could in government to avoid fiscal scrutiny. Oh how quickly they changed their tune. When the LNP came to government it delayed the budget until September of that year, despite the election being in March. They scrapped the annual economic review. They hid the reporting on the Queensland state accounts when the economy was tanking under their mismanagement. They only released the fiscal tables for the state accounts on the Treasury website under sustained pressure by the Labor opposition.

The Palaszczuk government's first budget demonstrated robust financial accountability. We will continue to do this through the fiscal reporting program set out by the independent Queensland

Treasury. If those opposite bothered to look, there is a suite of fiscal documents presented throughout the course of the financial year. Queensland Treasury Corporation prepare a large number of public reports that provide detailed information on government borrowing. Most importantly, the QTC blue book, available online anytime if those opposite chose to look, sets out the state's borrowing program. I took great pleasure in taking my own version of the Queensland Treasury Corporation blue book in my post-budget mission overseas when I went to Singapore, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, London and New York to talk about the budget. When travelling overseas there are no institutional investors or people who buy a Queensland paper who vote. They know a good set of numbers when they see them and they were very impressed with the budget. They were very impressed with how we are doing and the fiscal direction in which we are taking this state. The latest version of the blue book is available publicly on the QTC website. Treasury reporting that is publicly released on a regular basis includes the Consolidated Fund financial report published in February each year; the QTC annual report and half-yearly reports, which also contain state borrowing information; the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review published each year, and I will certainly be providing my MYFER update this month; reports on the state finances as required under the Financial Accountability Act; and, as promised, in case the member for Southern Downs missed it, we released the Review of State Finances prepared by the independent Queensland Treasury—and not the former Liberal Party treasurer—with the Queensland budget in July.

I will save the member for Southern Downs the trip to the Parliamentary Library or the budget website. The Palaszczuk government's first Labor budget included a forecast surplus of \$1.2 billion for 2015-16, the biggest seen since 2006-07; through our Debt Action Plan a reduction in general government debt by approximately \$7.5 billion in 2015-16, with further reductions across the forward estimates resulting in a reduction of \$9.6 billion in 2017-18 compared to the level of debt in the absence of these measures. Total borrowing is forecast to be lower every year over the forward estimates compared to those forecast by the previous government. After factoring in revenue writedowns and critically needed funding for Health and Education, general government borrowings are still forecast to be more than \$3.7 billion lower in 2017-18 than they were in 2014-15. All this without the need for asset sales, without mass sackings, without cuts to services or introducing new taxes, fees and charges.

We have been absolutely up-front with Queenslanders on the fiscal metrics that we will be measured against. We will return to the operating balance as our core fiscal metric. Every other state and territory uses the operating balance, as Queensland did before the Newman government and will again. The fiscal balance was recommended by Peter Costello. We know the real reason why he wanted to use the fiscal balance: because it allowed them to count the assets sales proceeds. This was all about providing an argument to sell assets, which would have ripped a \$2 billion a year structural hole in the budget bottom line. There is already a large amount of publicly available information on government debt. Any potential greater level of public accountability would be outweighed by the resources required to carry out the onerous reporting that the member for Southern Downs is requesting in his amendments. It will add costs. What those opposite fail to realise is that Treasury officials are in a constant state of reporting on Queensland's fiscal position—at least they are under our government. They are preparing figures for the upcoming financial year. They are reviewing figures for the previous financial year. They are submitting material for auditing. They are providing regular financial information to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This continuing reporting meets all the state's requirements under the uniform presentation framework, the UPF, agreed between all Australian jurisdictions. The UPF is aligned with the whole-of-government and general government sector financial reporting accounting standard. The UPF requires the publication of special financial statements, including a balance sheet for the various sectors of government in the Mid Year Fiscal and Economic Review, in the budget and the Report on State Finances. The UPF is an important framework for ensuring comparability of financial information across jurisdictions. This level of reporting has been maintained across successive governments in a bipartisan way.

If the amendments proposed by the Leader of the Opposition are agreed to, those opposite will be directly responsible for adding red tape and burdening the independent Treasury with an unnecessary layer of reporting. Surely the LNP, who have become self-anointed fighters of red tape—although nobody believes it—would not dream of consciously adding to that burden. Those opposite would be responsible for Treasury employing additional staff to prepare additional quarterly reporting. There is a stark contrast between us and those opposite. We have a plan to reduce debt and those opposite do not.

Let me address the final amendment of the member for Southern Downs regarding Labor's no asset sales pledge. It is now absolutely clear that the opposition leader has not read past page 3 of Labor's fiscal strategy and Debt Action Plan. The government's commitment has always been in relation to not selling the state's income-generating GOCs as part of a \$37 billion sellout. The state of Queensland owns these assets on behalf of the people of Queensland. These entities are owned by

the state for key strategic purposes and deliver critical, often essential, services to the people of Queensland. These services include providing energy, water, transport and port services. Our GOC entities, as commercial organisations, also deliver critical revenue to the state budget in the form of dividend and tax equivalent payments from the profits generated. These are profits generated after meeting all their obligations, including interest on debt raised to support their commercial operations. These organisations are and continue to be managed commercially under Labor. In fact, we are working hard to ensure they become even more customer focused and are equipped to deliver services with maximum efficiency and effectiveness. That is what we have a policy to do with the restructure of our energy GOCs, which I will be updating the Queensland public on later this month.

I will finish by focusing in this component of my address-in-reply speech on what I believe is really behind the amendments put forward by the member for Southern Downs: a guilty conscience. It is instructive to look at what the member for Southern Downs heard in the Governor's opening speech prior to the 54th Parliament. In the 54th Parliament the opening speech in relation to debt stated—

... the current position is unsustainable with our debt headed for unprecedented levels.

Those opposite then set about loading up over \$14 billion in additional debt over the last term in office and tried to blame the former Labor government. The opening speech said that the government was—

... committed to reducing unemployment to four per cent in six years. This target is underpinning all of my Government's work.

Those opposite then drove our unemployment rate up to as high as 6.7 per cent and left our rate at 6.5 per cent—mind you, after inheriting a rate of 5.5 per cent. The opening speech said the government would—

... regain Queensland's fiscal strength ...

It would restore confidence, restore Queensland's reputation and re-invigorate our economy. They left out that they would have a revisionist view on history when they failed to deliver on those promises. By comparison, the opening speech of this parliament was clear and unambiguous when it came to asset sales. Those opposite appear to be developing a word association complex, and right they should. The opening speech consistently defined our opposition to asset sales in connection with a \$37 billion fire sale—or \$47 billion as suggested by Campbell Newman towards the end of the campaign by the LNP. Let me quote again, for the member for Southern Downs, from the Governor's opening speech—

My government came to office after making clear to voters its opposition to asset sales proposed by the former government.

It believes asset sales cause job losses and that income-producing government-owned corporations earmarked for sale by the former government should be retained.

To fulfil its promises to voters, my government has already put in place steps to halt work associated with the sale of those assets which contribute an estimated \$2 billion a year to the State Budget.

Those opposite are still in denial about the rejection by Queenslanders of their 'wrong choices' propaganda about asset sales. It has, of course, emerged since the member for Southern Downs moved his amendment that the former government spent tens of millions of dollars on preparatory work for asset sales for which they had no mandate. Without any mandate whatsoever \$100 million was spent on asset sales preparation and Strong Choices propaganda. That money could have been spent on schools, hospitals, roads and unemployment programs. The money that those opposite wasted could have paid for, and then some, the entire \$70 million regional capital fund as part of Labor's Building our Regions program. Endless reporting and a new definition of the LNP's asset sales will not change the fact that Queenslanders rejected the LNP's fiscal agenda on 31 January 2015.

I had to get all of that out of the way, because this is an unusual situation with the Leader of the Opposition. Very rarely do we see anyone moving amendments to the Governor's address and the address-in-reply debate, but sadly I have had to use more than half of my time to address those amendments, which is unusual.

**Mr Springborg** interjected.

**Mr PITT:** He will never learn. He has been here for 26 years this week and still he has not got it. To finish where I started, I want to use my remaining time to thank people who were instrumental over the previous term and during January's election campaign. I must start with the 'significant seven': the small but mighty Labor caucus that I was so fortunate to be a part of last term. I thank the member for Inala, Annastacia Palaszczuk; the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller; the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne; and the member for South Brisbane, Jackie Trad. We later became the 'amazing eight' with the addition of the member for Stafford and then the 'noteworthy nine' after victory by the member for Redcliffe, when they both won comprehensive by-elections.

I take a moment to thank two members of the former Labor caucus who retired at the last election: Desley Scott and Tim Mulherin. Desley Scott, or Saint Desley as we would often refer to her, was the

rock on which we built our parliamentary week. She was the constant anchor in the chamber, who for decades served the people of Woodridge so well in her capacity as the local member of parliament, as the electorate officer for previous members or in the local community. Similarly, Tim Mulherin was a parliamentary veteran and one of my best mates who had a distinguished career as the member for Mackay, as a cabinet minister and as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I would spend many evenings in this place having to hear from a man who sat as premier in this chair right next to me; a man who had never sat in this place before becoming premier. The stories we could tell! The former member for Cairns has written a book about the bloke who used to sit in this chair, although book sales have not been going well. I think that even those opposite would have to agree that if Tim Mulherin ever wrote a book, it would be an absolute corker.

Over those three years I learned so much about myself and I learned so much from all of my colleagues. Sometimes you have to go through difficult periods in your life to grow and to realise just what you are capable of. I think all of those members who served the Labor Party in this place over the previous three years had an awfully big task, but they took to it with aplomb and they worked their way through it. We have a bond that no others can understand and we shared an experience that I would not trade for anything. Of course, in 2012 I was a survivor of one of the biggest electoral defeats, which is part of political history at that time. At the 2015 election, it was great to be part of history for all the right reasons. It may be the biggest comeback in Australia's political history.

I could not do what I do without my family. A big 'thank you' to my wife, Kerry, and my wonderful children, Tristan, Layla and Kobi. All members of this House know that the life of a member of parliament can be hard and being a regional member of parliament can be even harder. Being the shadow Treasurer from the Far North meant that I had even more time away. Now that I am Treasurer, I have to miss many more moments than I would like in the lives of my kids. However, my wife Kerry is the most amazing women—wait. She is the most amazing person I know. Essentially, she is a single mum and carries an enormous burden. Through it all, she is totally supportive and must sacrifice so much of herself. There are no words except thank you and I love you.

My parents, Warren and Linda Pitt, are the backstop for Kerry. If they were not my parents, I swear they would be people whom I would look up to in my own local community, such is their calibre. Often I am told that I have a great dad and I have to remind them that I have a great mum, as well. I thank my sister, Dionne, her husband, David, and their kids, who made the move from the tropical north to sunny Bellerive in Tasmania in May this year. They could have timed it a little better. My grandma, Doreen Dodd, my amazing aunties, uncles and cousins have been a great source of help and support. I particularly thank my cousin Anita Cummins, who is a paramedic and was one of the first responders at the Ravenshoe tragedy, and her brother Ben Cummins, who successfully refereed the Cowboys this year in their maiden NRL grand final win this year. Tim Mander, that is how it is done! I thank my father-in-law, Bill Grant, his wife, Patricia, and Uncle Bill Dodd.

In terms of my campaign, I say thanks to Jim Smith, my campaign director, and his wife, Ros; David Berry, my campaign manager; Bronwyn and Mick Hodgkins, the superstars who once again helped with the entire campaign; Diana and John O'Brien, for once again coordinating the Innisfail campaign; and the Innisfail based councillors Mark Nolan, Ian Rule and Kylie Farinelli. A big thank you to a former North Queensland organiser, Travis Dawson, for his contribution to the campaign, as well as to Tom Kenny. I thank my former electorate officer, Andrew Talbot, and the amazing Coral-Leah Kemp, who has been with me since April 2011. I have joked to the Minister for Science and Innovation that we must get to work on cloning techniques, because Coral would be a worthy candidate. Every EO needs a Coral.

I thank all of the booth captains and workers who volunteered their time, either on the day or at busy pre-polling locations leading up to the election, as well as those who financially contributed to the campaign. Special mention goes to Tracy and Andrew Morris, Leigh and Glen Dall'Osto, Beryl Ball, Ken and Vivien Robertson, Tom McCarthy and Eleanor Gregory, Simon Cotton, Bradley Higgins, Steven and Sonya Struber, Peter Rowles, Sandra Charlton, Michael Pappa, Cherie Fapani, Kylie Swales, Bruce and Brendan Slade, Adam Hooper, Nola Jappe, John Rhiel, Gordon and Joan Dilger, Ian and Leanne Kruger, Adrian Hooper, Joy Murgatroyd, Anne Holden, Joy Taylor, Delia Merlo, Peter Gunsberger, Shannon James, Fred James, Matt Thompson, Aaqib Abdulala and Sherry Karban.

Thank you to the broader Labor movement, union members and officials for their support, particularly the National Union of Workers, the Queensland Nurses' Union, the Queensland Teachers' Union, the ETU, the CFMEU, the AMWU, the Services Union, the Plumbers Union, the Maritime Union of Australia, the United Firefighters Union, Together Queensland, the Australian Workers' Union and United Voice. I mention all of those because, quite simply, to win government back in such a short time required two very important things: a united Labor movement, which we saw, as well as, of course, being aided and abetted by Campbell Newman.

Special mention must go to all of those people who were working at the QCU, particularly, Ron Monaghan, who I hold in such high esteem. Lots of people thought that we could come back, but the person who believed it more than anyone else was Ron. He always believed that a win was possible. I thank all of the hardworking staff of the former opposition office, many of whom have transitioned to positions in the government, particularly Angela McDonough, Lindsay Marshall who ran media, Peter Nibbs and a very special thank you to Tim Linley. I thank everyone at the ALP state branch: President Dick Williams, new state secretary Evan Moorhead, former campaign director Anthony Chisolm and all in the campaign strategy team who ran a fantastic campaign that every Labor member in this state can be proud of. I also thank Gurinder Mavi from the Sikh community for hosting yet another delicious Indian banquet as a fundraiser for the election. It is always an enjoyable evening and I am looking forward to the next election because it means we will have a chance to hopefully retain government and, of course, have another Sikh Indian dinner. It is something we look forward to, even if it only comes around every three years. With those comments, I wish all members a very successful and enjoyable time for the remainder of this term.