




Speech By
Hon. Leeanne Enoch

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Hon. LM ENOCH** (Algester—ALP) (Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation) (9.01 pm): It is a great honour to be the first Aboriginal woman to ever rise in this House. It is a great honour to speak tonight in support of the Premier's motion of confidence. In this debate I am speaking on behalf of the electorate of Algester, who voted overwhelmingly for a Palaszczuk Labor government on 31 January. I wish to have it recorded that I intend to seek out an opportunity to share the reasons I am in this place, my personal story and the story of my electorate during the address-in-reply at a later time during this sitting of parliament. So in this debate I am speaking predominantly in relation to this confidence motion.

Let me begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we gather, the Turrbal and the Yugerra peoples. In doing so, may I acknowledge all of our elders: those who have passed and those who are still with us guiding us into the future. Let me also take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on your historic election as Speaker of the House. I have every confidence that you will provide firm and fair guidance in this place regardless of what challenges may arise over the next three years. May I also congratulate all honourable members on their election or re-election to this place.

It is a great honour to rise tonight to speak in support of this confidence motion. In doing so, I would like to firstly thank the electors of Algester for the confidence that they have shown in me. Algester is made up of diverse and vibrant communities with tremendous local spirit and it is my honour to represent them here in this place. Mr Speaker, as you know, being chosen by your local community to represent them in the state's parliament is an incredible act of trust, and I thank the people of my electorate for putting their trust in me and putting their trust in the Labor Party. It was a choice made by electors in each and every one of the 89 electorates across the state on 31 January. I am pleased to say that the change of representation that occurred in Algester was repeated again and again across the state and in enough of those 89 electorates that we were available to form a new government that will govern for all Queenslanders.

It was a mammoth turnaround from the previous election. The 2012 election saw the Liberal National Party, led by Campbell Newman and his leadership team, many of whom we still see opposite, swept into power with the same momentum that saw it swept back out just three years later. That turnaround in electoral fortunes was something unexpected by many, no doubt including those opposite. With such a majority, many commentators believed that a change of government was impossible. In my own electorate of Algester I personally spoke to thousands of people from across my community throughout the campaign, either on their doorstep or over their phone. Over and over I heard stories of concern about the direction the former government had taken us, and a change of government was something people in my electorate were very eager for. I heard stories like those from Louise from Parkinson who shared her own personal experience as a nurse, concerned that patient-nurse ratios in our hospitals were running at dangerous levels; or David from Forest Lake and Alan from Boronia Heights who had been made redundant from their jobs and had been tirelessly

searching for over 12 months with no luck for something to help support their families. The stress and frustration described by these men was something I sadly heard many more times across the electorate. There was also the story of Rhonda, a single mother from Algeester, who was struggling to meet the increasing pressures of just getting her children fed, sheltered, clothed and educated; or John, a young school leaver, who wanted to start a career in the community services sector but could not afford the skyrocketing TAFE fees for the course he needed to complete.

On 31 January, the people of Algeester resoundingly rejected the direction of the former government. Instead, they voted for fairness in the workplace. They voted for rescuing TAFE and improving vocational education and training. They voted for a stronger democracy and an accountable government. They voted for teachers in our classrooms, a focus on patient safety and protecting the Great Barrier Reef and they voted for a sensible, measured economic policy that does not sell the family silverware for a short-term sugar hit.

Since the election I have been honoured to have been made the Minister for Housing and Public Works and Minister for Science and Innovation. Both portfolios are ones that can have a real impact on the lives of Queenslanders and I am looking forward to the challenges of each. I have a clear vision for Housing. I want to see it return to its natural place as a human or social service rather than just a transactional or contractual arrangement. There are few things more fundamental to someone's wellbeing and ability to contribute to society than having a roof over their head—something for which my family was very grateful during the early years of my mum's and dad's marriage. To have the option of the availability of public housing to support our family allowed us to have access to education and good jobs and provided the ability to raise a family. I think it is too easy to lose sight of that when everything is reduced to numbers on a spreadsheet. For example, in 2012 one of the first acts of the previous government was to remove all funding to the Tenant Advice and Advocacy Service. This left tenants in my own electorate and many people whom I knew from across the state without an independent body to provide advice and support services in an area where disputes can be complex, confusing and intimidating. The Palaszczuk Labor government is establishing a fund of up to \$20 million over four years to make sure that tenants in both the public and private sectors have access to independent support, information and advocacy services.

Another important commitment for which many in my electorate and in the social housing sector have called and about which they have continued to talk to me during the first months in government is the undertaking of a review of the public housing system to ensure that fairness is reinstated into the system. This will look at a range of issues such as what income is assessed when rents are calculated and what conditions are placed on tenants. A key part of that will be the temporary absences policy, which restricted the movements of public housing tenants and limited their leave to four weeks a year. I do not personally support people leaving their public housing dwellings for extended periods without a legitimate reason. However, in most cases there are legitimate claims for people to go away. In opposition, we were contacted by many distraught and concerned public housing tenants. For example, there was an elderly couple, aged 80 and 90 years old, who wanted to go overseas for the very last time to see their family and say goodbye. They had scrimped and saved for years for the trip. When they did the right thing, like so many people do, and told the department that they would be away for six weeks, they were told that under that particular policy they could only go away for four weeks and that if they were away any longer, they may not have a house to come back to.

More broadly, I want to make sure that we are exploring innovative ways to work with the community sector to reinvigorate housing and in doing so genuinely consulting with all stakeholders. We need to ensure that there is the right model of housing available to meet the changing needs of Queenslanders into the future.

It is not just the social housing sector that has raised concerns with me in the last few months. In May last year the former government amended the Plumbing and Drainage Act 2002 in relation to the installation of water meters. The industry conducted a hard-fought campaign against allowing unlicensed people to install water meters—David, one of my own constituents, was one of those people who took up the fight with many of his colleagues—but unfortunately, they were not listened to. Together with my cabinet colleague the Minister for Energy and Water Supply, the Hon. Mark Bailey, we are now working with our departments to address this issue.

Late last year the previous government disbanded the Plumbing Industry Council. An industry performs at its best if it operates within a legislative and regulatory framework reflecting the highest standards. As part of restoring high standards to the plumbing industry, we are re-establishing a dedicated plumbing industry regulatory body within the Queensland Building and Construction Commission.

We are a government that listens, and in recent meetings industry stakeholders have told me that, with the transfer of the former Plumbing Industry Council's role to the Queensland Building and Construction Commission, there have been some positive improvements. Plumbers tell me that having a one-stop shop for all of their licensing requirements is much more efficient. They also appreciate being able to call the QBCC 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a government, we will work with industry stakeholders and the QBCC to restore the Plumbing Industry Council, while at the same time retaining all of the improvements that plumbers are currently experiencing. Action to implement this important commitment has now commenced and will be completed in the months ahead.

The Premier has made it clear that job creation is the top priority of her government, and I think that science and innovation is one of the keys to that. We have all heard it said that the jobs that will be available to our children and grandchildren will be in areas that we cannot even imagine today. One of our key election commitments is the Advance Queensland policy. It is a comprehensive plan to help Queensland attract and retain the best and brightest minds and build our reputation as a knowledge based economy. These programs are specifically designed to drive research and innovation in Queensland, particularly in areas where our state already has a competitive advantage such as: medicine and biotechnology; agriculture and agribusiness; advantaged food technologies and processing; engineering, particularly mining technology and water management; and clean energy production and storage, particularly renewables and biorefining. A specific focus for research will be the ongoing protection of the Great Barrier Reef, acknowledging the importance and value of the reef to Queensland. Not only will this research help protect one of the great wonders of the world, but it will also help protect the tens of thousands of workers who rely on the reef for their weekly pay packets.

The \$50 million Advance Queensland package has a range of initiatives such as establishing a Knowledge Transport Partnership Program and providing a three-year payroll tax holiday to new companies established in Queensland as a result of Advance Queensland research programs. The centrepiece of the package is the Advance Queensland research fellowships. Up to 100 postdoctoral research fellowships will be awarded in Labor's first term with the focus on those target areas I listed earlier. There are four components to these research fellowships: Advance Queensland innovation fellowships; Advance Queensland women's fellowships; Advance Queensland regional fellowships; and Advance Queensland Indigenous fellowships. Each of these components target areas where we have room to improve our performance as a state. The innovation fellowships will be focused on developing links between industry and researchers to target research that will help stimulate economic growth and jobs. It has been well documented that for a range of reasons women are underrepresented in academic research, particularly at senior levels. To help address this underrepresentation, women's fellowships will be offered through Advance Queensland.

As we all know, Queensland is one of the most decentralised states in Australia, yet our regional cities are home to a number of world-class universities engaged in groundbreaking research. Our regional fellowships will help ensure that the capacity of our regional universities remains strong. Finally, we will also deliver a number of Indigenous fellowships. Indigenous researchers are also underrepresented among the ranks of postdoctoral researchers. The Indigenous fellowships will be offered specifically to researchers who identify as Indigenous and who are in the early stages of their careers. Preferences will be given to Indigenous researchers who have graduated from Queensland universities and/or high schools.

These fellowships not only target four important areas, but they will also be delivered in an innovative way. In each case, the majority of the funding for the fellowships will come from the Queensland government, but they will also utilise a cooperative arrangement with both universities and industry partners also contributing funding. The fellowships program will be supported by several other Advance Queensland initiatives, including: awarding 20 Advance Queensland university scholarships to postgraduate students each year to encourage women, Indigenous students and those from low socioeconomic areas to pursue a master's degree in specific fields of study; setting aside \$1 million for the Advance Queensland Women's Academic fund, which will provide a funding source for female postdoctoral researchers to help them advance their careers; reviewing the teaching of STEM—science, technology, engineering and mathematics—subjects, giving particular consideration to creating a squad of science champions in schools by improving links between schools and research facilities.

Of course, business development is an important part of effective research and development, and that was the focus of one of our other key election policies. Under the Working Queensland plan, the government will establish a Business Development Fund of up to \$40 million over four years

under a co-investment model. The aim is to provide critical seed investment for emerging industries, including niche marketing, to support the creation of the high tech jobs of the future. The fund will help Queensland's best and brightest make their ideas and innovations a commercial reality.

The fact is that it is the Labor side of politics in Queensland that has consistently delivered the support provided to science, research and innovation. Previous investments included putting in place key research infrastructure as part of Labor's aim to create and support a knowledge economy in Queensland—measures like supporting the construction of the Queensland Brain Institute at the University of Queensland, the Translational Research Institute, the Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation at the Queensland University of Technology and the QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute. In fact, between 1998 and 2012 the number of scientists in Queensland more than doubled to over 18,000. During the same period 44 research institutes were built. It is this level of commitment to science and innovation that has been somewhat absent for the last three years and that Queensland will see a return to under the Palaszczuk government.

The Palaszczuk Labor government's focus is squarely on jobs. More people in secure jobs mean a resilient economy and greater business confidence. Job security is the bedrock on which economies grow. People will not spend if they are afraid of losing their jobs, and investors will not invest if people are not spending. We have a comprehensive jobs plan to support economic growth and employment with \$652 million in investment over four years which includes: \$50 million for Advance Queensland; \$40 million for the business development fund policies that I have spoken about; \$200 million for the Building our Regions fund to deliver vitally needed infrastructure in regional areas; \$34 million as part of our Rescuing TAFE policy to improve training and to provide skills for young people who need to find work; reinstating the Skilling Queenslanders for Work employment programs to support 32,000 Queenslanders back into jobs; our Queensland Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow program to support education and computational science and business development and to support stay-at-home parents to develop home based businesses; payroll tax rebates for employers who hire apprentices and trainees; a Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council to focus on the areas of regulation that are of most concern to business; and a commitment that 10 per cent of workers on major government projects are apprentices and trainees, including projects delivered by government owned corporations.

We know that we face some big challenges in turning the economy around, but securing jobs—not only for people in my electorate of Algester, but for all Queenslanders—is where it starts, because that is how we build confidence. Although I will seek an opportunity to speak at greater length on topics expected in a maiden speech, let me take just a moment to thank my family, my extended family, my community, the Labor Party and my union for all of their support during the election campaign.

Mostly, let me thank the people of Algester who on 31 January placed their confidence in me and in the Palaszczuk Labor government. That is why I am speaking in support of this confidence motion tonight. This government has been given the confidence of the people of Queensland. It deserves the confidence of this parliament.