




Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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**ADDRESS-IN-REPLY**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (9.11 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I begin by congratulating the Speaker on his appointment and election to office and I ask that you convey those congratulations to him. I look forward to the execution of his duties of the high office of Speaker in accordance with his often stated principles of being an independent, fair and judicious judge of the events and affairs that occur in this House.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I say that after nine months of experience, too. I am honoured to address the 55th Parliament as the member for Clayfield in my fourth term in this place. I am also pleased to serve as the shadow minister for infrastructure, planning, small business, employment and trade. I will touch on each of those shadow portfolios in my address-in-reply. I want to thank His Excellency the Governor for his welcome to Government House at the occasion of the swearing in of the new government.

I also take this opportunity to welcome all the new members of parliament. In particular, I want to welcome the new Liberal National Party members who have made their way into this House. I say to them that they are all very welcome here in the Queensland parliament. I offer all members my best wishes and congratulations as they each begin their unique journey in the Queensland parliament. If I do not wish some members a long journey, at least I hope they have a fulfilling one while they are here.

I also want to reflect on the many fine members of the 54th Parliament from the LNP who were unsuccessful in their bid to be returned to the 55th Parliament. I am sure that I speak for many on this side of the House when I say that we certainly wish their results were otherwise. For those among them for whom the desire to serve in this place remains strong, I say to them to keep the faith. We will be doing all we can to bring them back to this place for the 56th Parliament.

I also want to thank the former premier, Campbell Newman, for the opportunity that he afforded me to serve as treasurer and minister for trade in this great state. It is indeed a rare privilege for the time granted to any of us to lead one of the great and enduring departments of the state. I also want to acknowledge the power of work accomplished by the ministry and the Public Service under premier Newman in all areas. I refer particularly to the efforts spent modernising and renewing our state, sweeping away entrenched cultures of complacency and ideas of privilege and preference and renewing our dedication to the ideals of an effective and outcomes focused government elected to drive prosperity, jobs and services for the people of Queensland. I disagree with the member for Sandgate entirely. The result of 2012 was a judgement on 20 long years of Labor in government in this state and it was a clear repudiation of that style of government.

I also acknowledge the message sent to the former government by the electorate on 31 January. As a party we received the majority of first preference votes, but that did not translate into a majority in this place. Although it might be said that the outcome is the result of a protest vote gone wrong, that is the system we have and we take our licks. I acknowledge that and I say to the electorate: we understand

your disappointment in the way in which some of the things were done and some of the policies that we implemented. Although in many instances they were necessary, they were not explained fully and, in essence, we needed to explain more and listen more carefully. But that does not mean that we needed to abdicate responsibility or not take action after 20 long years of Labor mismanagement.

I have had the benefit of not only having listened to His Excellency's speech setting out the government's program at the opening of parliament but also having seen play out the first nine months of the government's agenda. When I first started writing this speech I was going to say 'the first three weeks of this government's agenda'. But as we enter the declining days of 2015, I am now on to version 19.1. So I have had an opportunity to revise this speech and add more to it in terms of what we have seen.

The agenda of this current government is, of course, living down to all expectations. By its own admission, little was promised by this government and even less is being delivered: a ramshackle policy agenda driven by the old Labor politics of preference for unions and disdain for the private sector focused on division and discord rather than excellence and achievement; a government whose first nine months has been all about paying its debts to its union bosses—and how many times have we heard that spoken about in this House by those opposite; a government that has viciously been undoing anything undertaken by the previous government irrespective of how well it worked or what it delivered; a government that is more about entrenching privilege for union bosses rather than about creating jobs and prosperity for and the security and safety of Queenslanders; a government that eschews reform and abandons the heritage of its great leaders, Hawke and Keating; a government that will forever be timid as it appeases its union paymasters. Like light beer, light milk and light cheese, this government is lightweight in both policy depth and execution—a pale imitation of what meaningful government should be.

If I look at the chaos that ensued after the first 100 days of the Palaszczuk government, I see that there is no comparison with the LNP's first 100 days of achievement. Under the LNP, on day one we saw the director-general instructed to put in motion the machinery-of-government changes that created individual departments, moving away from the mega departments that were created under Anna Bligh—departments like agriculture and racing that were abandoned under Labor, mega departments like the late and unlamented department of environment and resource management, although I feel that it is creeping its way back again. I feel that the dreaded DERM is growing again. Somewhere in a dark corner there is a dream that is held by the Labor government. It wants the department of environment and resource management back again to stifle prosperity, to make it harder for anyone to make a dollar in this great state. I say to the member for Hinchinbrook that we all remember the department of employment and economic development and industry—DEEDI. Those departments not only confused and alienated their stakeholders but also confused and alienated their employees. They left people wondering what was going on, who was doing it and where it was being done.

So we did that on day one. Under the Labor Party, on day one there were selfies in front of Parliament House. That was their achievement. Under the LNP, after 30 days it was receiving a full briefing from Treasury on the state accounts. Members will know that I have a favourite. I have brought it along today. Earlier today I heard the member for Stretton trying to talk about economics and finances. I realised that the hunt was on among the factions over there for the vote of the member for Stretton. Where was he going to go? Is he with the AWU? Is he with the old guard, or unity, the mudguard, the left wing, or the right wing?

Whoever secures the vote of the member for Stretton is going to regret it very shortly. Whoever loses him is going to say, 'Thank goodness we got rid of that economic genius.' I heard the Treasurer on radio this morning talking about jargon. He was asked what words he hated most and he said, 'The two words I hate most are fiscal reform.' Being able to hate them presupposes being able to understand them in the first place and I do not think that is the case. The words on the front of the incoming government brief in 2012 from Queensland Treasury were *Fiscal Reform Blueprint*. It is no wonder that the member for Mulgrave hates those words because they are the signature words of the government that he was part of up until 2012. What was contained in the blueprint was—

Sustainability of Queensland's Fiscal position.

Queensland's fiscal position and outlook is unsustainable and restoration must be an urgent priority for this term of Government. Up to 2005-06, Queensland debt levels were low and stable. In the period from 2005-06 to 2009-10 the level of State debt more than doubled. Debt in 2014-15 is expected to be almost 5 times greater than 10 years prior.

**Mr Hinchliffe:** That's right.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The member for Sandgate was there. He was one of the authors. He sat around the table that made this happen—

In the period from 2005-06 to 2010-11, General Government expenses grew at almost double the rate of revenue.

The economic geniuses over there, aided by the member for Stretton who has made his way back into the House, were spending at this rate but the income is coming in at this rate and there was a big gap in the middle. And what did they do? They borrowed. They put it on the MasterCard. And what happened? The people who looked at the MasterCard said, 'Sorry, you can't keep doing that. By the way, we're going to take away your credit rating. We're going to drop your credit rating down', and Queenslanders ended up paying \$200 million-plus more in interest expenses than they would otherwise have done. The fastest single growing item of expenditure in the Queensland accounts in 2012-13 was not health, it was not education, it was not police, it was not law and order services—

**Mr Minnikin:** Pick me! Pick me!

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am not going to ask the member for Chatsworth. He knows the answer. The fastest single growing expense in the Queensland government expenses was interest—interest going around the world to pay for the money that we borrowed because Labor was spending at double the rate that it was earning—\$575,000 an hour going out the door. That was the situation that we found. What had happened in that time? Even though they sold assets without telling people—went out and sold Aurizon and the Gateway Motorway company and a couple of others—even though they made all that money the debt was still going up. It never went down. It just kept going up every year like a balloon full of helium and about as worthwhile under that mob. They know they got it wrong. They even had blues with their own unions. I see the member for Woodridge opposite, then the member for Greenslopes, who has been reincarnated and come back. What did he say in an interview with Madonna King on 24 September 2010? They were even fighting with their own mates in the union. They reconciled, of course. The member for Woodridge said—

What a surprise, Madonna, that Peter Simpson—

Where is the member for Kallangur? He will be listening—

friend of the ETU who has been opposed to the asset sales from go, says this week, and it was all personally based this week, it was an attack on the leader directly, the former member for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh. That's, you know—Peter Simpson's the media mouth for hire in the trade union movement when it comes to asset sales.

The media mouth for hire in the trade union movement according to the member for Woodridge. I am still on day 30. We appointed the Commission of Audit to undertake a full audit of the state's finances and commence a war on waste, including cutting travel expenses by 20 per cent and advertising by 20 per cent. We acted to freeze family car registration for our entire term. We froze electricity bills that were set to rise at 11.8 per cent just seven days after we were elected. We commenced drafting legislation that would make it illegal again to not tell the truth to the parliament when you were being examined by a parliamentary committee. We all remember Gordon Nuttall and what he did. We drafted that and implemented that legislation. We drafted legislation to reduce real estate red tape by scrapping the sustainability declarations and streamlining home loan sale contracts and statements. We consulted with the police union and the commissioner to begin getting around 50 police out of the office, out from behind office desks, and back on the beat as part of our commitment to increase police numbers by over 1,000, which we are delivering on which this government still continues to claim credit for. And we started to repeal Labor's \$372 million industry waste levy to cut costs for Queensland businesses that would have been another blow for small businesses throughout the state.

In 30 days under Labor what did we see? They axed the surgery wait-time guarantee, succumbing to their union masters. There was review after review after review. We are now up to more than 74 reviews. We saw cancellation or review of major projects from resources to tourism and everything in between threatening the creation of thousands of jobs.

In 100 days under the LNP we removed the Labor stamp duty slug of \$7,000 on the family home. We restored the Coordinator-General's power and authority to coordinate and facilitate major projects. We established Infrastructure Queensland for long-term infrastructure planning prioritisation and ongoing management and maintenance. We established Projects Queensland in Queensland Treasury, driving cooperative funding models to maximise private investment in Queensland infrastructure and review the unsolicited projects framework now claimed by the member for Mulgrave. He stood up in this place during the budget and said, 'Look at this new framework for dealing with it.' The work was done before he got in the door. All he had to do was pick up the paper out of the out-tray and say, 'Here it is. I am yet again delivering LNP homework on behalf of the people of Queensland.'

What else did we do? We established the framework to begin Royalties for the Regions delivering nearly \$400-plus million worth of jobs and employment to people all throughout the state who had been ignored for too long. I had a look at the Auditor-General's report this morning. What did it say? It said it had achieved its aims. The opening paragraph states that it achieved its aims. It delivered jobs and activity to rural Queensland. Because it did not meet the requirements of the ALP's narrowly focused

'you are not in the grants program you don't get a program', we would never have seen jobs like in the member for Gregory's electorate.

We were only just talking about the kindergartens that were being delivered around the state, the jobs in the electorate of the member for Warrego and in Whitsunday where we are delivering roads that would never otherwise have been delivered outside of the normal programs which we still continue to deliver. It is an extra bonus for those regions that had been abandoned by Labor. They took the royalties, the income, but they never spent a cent out there. That is what we did.

We also delivered exit 54 and the Gateway merge. We established the Bruce Highway Crisis Management Group. We got \$10 billion out of the feds to upgrade the Bruce Highway, something that this government will never be able to achieve, and we started the regional planning process for the Darling Downs and Central Queensland giving regional Queenslanders access to planning laws like they have in the cities and major regional centres.

What do we have after 100 days under Labor? The member for Cook, the member for Pumicestone, the member for Bundamba, a police protection racket around the member for Bundamba, the member for Bundamba having a police protection racket around the member for Pumicestone and everyone having a protection racket around the member for Cook. We had turf warfare between the member for Stafford and the member for South Brisbane and they still have not quite settled that yet. I do not know about you, but my money is on the member for South Brisbane. I reckon that is a winner. Not much doing but a lot of reviewing.

What did they do? They called in, cancelled or otherwise placed under a cloud projects, which in turn has reduced job prospects: the BaT tunnel, Trinity Inlet, the Gold Coast cruise ship development, the Kurilpa riverfront and Cedar Woods. But they did make some announcements. They announced LNP projects that were already well underway under the LNP and none more so than Queen's Wharf. I heard the member for Brisbane Central crow about Queen's Wharf and, as I predicted at the time, there was not one mention of 1 William Street. They need 1 William Street if everything else is to happen, but they do not want to think about it. We can compare the changes.

I probably need another 20 minutes to go through the rest of this, because this is such a good story. Now we have seen that that cancellation of infrastructure has damaged business confidence. We need look no further than the trip that we took to Darwin last week. I was getting onto the plane and a fellow stopped me on the gangway and said, 'Tim, what's happening in Queensland? I have a job with Leightons. We are finishing up with INPEX in Darwin. There are no jobs in Queensland. We will be going to New South Wales. We will be going to a state where they are progressing infrastructure, where they are recycling assets and where they are getting on with the job of building.'

Employment growth was forecast to average 2.25 per cent under the LNP; over the same period under Labor, growth is forecast to be 1.67 per cent. Economic growth, which was forecast to be 5.75 per cent under us, has been revised down to 4.5 per cent. We see a state that under the LNP had positive prospects, a rosy future and that was going places come to a screaming halt under a clueless Labor government that does not have a plan. It is still talking about a plan, but it has no way of paying for it.

I have just received from the member for Chatsworth a message that is dead right: I want to thank my family, who, by pure chance, are here in the gallery tonight. I thank my wife, Mary, and my three children, Jeremy, Duncan and Kate, who have supported me through all of my endeavours. During our term in government, Mary bore the brunt of family trials and tribulations, absences and long days dealing with the three kids by herself. Seeing that I have more time at home these days, of course I have provided an interruption to the well-established routine of family life that is not always appreciated. Nonetheless, I thank them and all family members for the chance to be here yet again in the 55th Parliament.

*(Time expired)*