




Speech By
Hon. Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Hon. YM D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills) (2.37 pm): I rise on this historic occasion to speak in support of this confidence motion in the Palaszczuk Labor government. I thank the people of Redcliffe for once again putting their confidence in me, and in doing so putting their confidence in the Palaszczuk Labor government. It is a pleasure to follow the minister and member for Stafford.

Today sees the acknowledgement of a range of firsts—the first female Premier to have won office from opposition, the first female Premier and Deputy Premier team in Queensland, and the first truly independent Speaker in a century. These are significant milestones—milestones that clearly highlight the difference between this government and others. This is a government with a commitment to integrity, transparency, accountability, compassion and fairness. This is a government with a commitment to consultation and respect. They are not just words; they are indicative of this government's values, its standards and its commitments. These are the bricks and mortar of good government.

It is important to recognise where we have come from and how we arrived at where we are today. The now Premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and her Labor team spent three years listening to the people of Queensland. Under her leadership we had a renewed commitment to listening. It was three years of consulting, getting out and speaking to Queenslanders right across the state and listening to their concerns, their expectations and their desire for good government. We listened to their disappointment and anger at being let down by the LNP government. We reconnected with the people of Queensland, utilised their ideas in formulating our policies in education, training, the environment and strengthening front-line services like health and education, and in restoring decency and proper governance in the delivery of justice in Queensland. We recognised that Queenslanders were looking for something better than the arrogant, extreme and out of touch LNP government. We reconnected and rebuilt, and by working with the people of Queensland we were able to restore their faith in us.

Over the last three years, we saw an LNP government, including most of those individuals opposite, attack Queenslanders. We are here today because of the message Queenslanders sent. They sent a clear message at the Redcliffe by-election that they deserved better. They sent a clear message at the Stafford by-election that the LNP were not listening and were refusing to change. When their protests fell on deaf ears, the people of Queensland sent the loudest message they possibly could at the general election, removing what had been the largest majority in Australia's political history. After the result in Redcliffe, the result in Stafford and the result right across the state in the general election, we have LNP members walk into this House still refusing to listen to the people of Queensland. We have only heard one opposition member actually acknowledge that there had been some failings over the past three years by the LNP government, and that has come from the former Speaker.

Today was the opportunity for the LNP leader and deputy leader to step up and acknowledge those failings and how they let down the people of Queensland. They could have showed humility from the fact that they lost government but they failed to do that today. They should support this motion of confidence as a recognition of the views of Queenslanders, as democratically articulated through our open and independent political system. The real test for those opposite will be in the weeks and months ahead—will they actually listen to the people of Queensland or will they spend every waking hour trying to defend the legacy of the LNP government, in which the now Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Opposition were senior cabinet ministers?

In terms of my portfolio areas, today marks a new way of operating—one that is based on respect and consultation. The government is committed to rebuilding a respectful, productive, collaborative dialogue with our stakeholders. We may not agree on every last detail but we will always listen and honestly consider differing points of view. We will respect those with which we deal, we will respect due process and we will respect the independence of the judiciary. We will not attack the judiciary for administering the law to the best of its ability in accordance with the oath of office. We will not seek to silence criticism and stifle debate through personal denigration of the legal profession and 'no advocacy' gag clauses. Let me be very clear: we will consult with the legal profession and the judiciary and we will never betray or misrepresent those advices rightly sought and provided in confidence. Sadly, the arrogance, extremism and betrayal of the LNP still has ramifications in the legal profession today.

I as Attorney-General and this government as a whole will have respect for institutions and the law. We will have respect for individuals—whether judiciary, professionals working in the justice system or people going through the justice system. That respect also extends to the hardworking men and women of the Public Service. They are professionals who dedicate their working life to good public policy. In my portfolio, I know there are so many dedicated and enthusiastic people who are passionate about delivering a fair and open justice system—people who are as passionate as I am about training and skills and the power of education and training to improve the lives of individuals, to help them get back into the workforce, to provide for their family, to contribute to the community and to help build Queensland's skilled economy. I am keen to work with our professional and hardworking departments to deliver sound policy and real outcomes for the people of Queensland.

Queenslanders endorsed our integrity and accountability agenda including: legislation to lower the political donation threshold from \$12,800 back to \$1,000, including for the period from 21 November 2013; restoring six-monthly reporting requirements; and investigating the possibility of real-time disclosure of political donations. We are introducing this legislation because Queenslanders deserve to know who is making significant donations to political parties and how much they are donating.

A key priority is our commitment to reviewing and addressing organised crime in Queensland. The Criminal Law (Criminal Organisations Disruption) Amendment Act 2013, the Criminal Code (Criminal Organisations) Regulation 2013, the Tattoo Parlours Act 2013 and the Vicious Lawless Association Disestablishment Act 2013 were pushed through this parliament without proper scrutiny or debate. Queenslanders expect better than this. They expect more from their government. I assure the House that this government will do better. I am seeking nominations for the high-level task force to review the 2013 organised crime laws. We are delivering on our commitment to tackle organised crime, and we are examining how to best improve legislation and deliver safe and just communities right across the state. We will do what the LNP failed to do—and that is to properly consult. The task force will report back to the government by December 2015 about how that can best be done. This government is also working to establish a commission of inquiry into organised crime which will inquire into the extent, nature and societal impacts of organised crime in Queensland. We recognise that organised crime is broader than just outlaw motorcycle gangs.

As part of its commitment to restore Queensland's integrity and accountability, the government made a number of election commitments for changes to the Crime and Corruption Commission to ensure its independence. The process of restoring the integrity of the Crime and Corruption Commission is underway with the national search for a chair and a CEO, as well as the two ordinary commissioner positions. I will be consulting with stakeholders about the implementation of the government's other CCC election commitments.

We will also be examining the current processes for the appointment of judicial officers in Queensland to develop a protocol as to how judicial appointments ought to be made. I can assure the House that any appointments that are made before the protocol is settled will follow proper processes, as has already occurred with our first appointment. Let me make this very clear: consultation and any advice offered will be treated by me with nothing but respect and absolute confidentiality.

In talking about the judiciary, I want to briefly touch on the fact that Justice Wilson is retiring today. I would have very much liked to have been at Justice Wilson's ceremony this morning, but unfortunately I could not with parliament sitting. I thank the Solicitor-General for representing me at that event. I want to put on the record the government's thanks to Justice Wilson. I would like to thank him for his years of service and recognise his deserving reputation for fairness, decency and intelligence. Justice Wilson is retiring from the Supreme Court having previously served on the District Court and as the inaugural president of QCAT. He is widely respected and highly regarded in the legal profession, judiciary and government. In particular, his leadership as inaugural president of the newly formed QCAT at the time is regarded as one of the underlying reasons for its success. I and this government wish Justice Wilson all the best for the future.

I also wish to touch on Legal Aid and community legal centres. This is an area that has been of particular concern not just to the legal profession but to many in the community about the potential cuts. I am pleased to say that I recently joined with attorneys-general across the states and territories of this country from all political persuasions to collectively agree to write to the federal Attorney-General asking for a commitment to maintain funding for our community legal centres and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services into the future. I can advise the House that as of today Senator the Hon. George Brandis QC, the federal Attorney-General, has released a statement which notes—

The Federal Government is providing certainty for the legal assistance sector by guaranteeing current funding levels for the next two years. The changes due to take effect on 1 July 2015 will not proceed.

...

After considerable consultation with State and Territory Governments and service providers, it has been decided there will be no reduction in Commonwealth funding to Legal Aid Commissions, Community Legal Centres (except Environmental Defenders Offices) and Indigenous legal assistance for the next two years.

What this shows is that already this government has proven that we can work with our interstate colleagues of all political persuasions and with the Commonwealth to get good outcomes for Queenslanders.

I wish to touch on youth justice. Youth justice is about getting the balance right between punishment and rehabilitation. It is not, as some might claim, being soft on crime. It is about making sure that those who commit crimes face appropriate punishment and have the opportunity to develop new skills to turn their lives around and that the courts have the necessary sentencing options to achieve these goals. I am looking at all the programs currently operating in the youth justice sector to ensure they are effective and delivering real outcomes for Queensland. We do not live in isolation. Programs and strategies that have proven to be effective in other states and countries should not be ignored. They need to be carefully evaluated to ensure their implementation is suitable in the Queensland environment.

We are committed to conducting a review of boot camps and we will make sure that review is based on objective data, consultation with stakeholders and analysis of similar systems. We will not hide the review's findings. We will publish them and we will publicly respond to each and every recommendation. We already know some of the previous government's laws in youth justice are counterproductive, and I will be introducing legislation to ensure those laws are righted. Provisions like naming young offenders, removing the principle that detention of young offenders should be a last resort and transferring 17-year-olds with more than six months of their sentence left to serve into adult prisons are entrenching young people into a life of crime. These are areas that we will address. Concerns about these laws were raised at the time by the Queensland Law Society, the Queensland Bar Association, the Anglican Church, the Uniting Church, Sisters Inside, Bond University's Centre for Law, Governance and Public Policy, Griffith University's School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, James Cook University's Comparative Youth Penalty Project, the Anti-Discrimination Commission and the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. We have listened and we are acting. We do not close the door on young people who have strayed. We do not close the door on opportunities that they need in order to become productive members of society.

This government is committed to also establishing the Sentencing Advisory Council for Queensland. Originally its role was to bridge any gap among the community, government and the judiciary regarding sentencing issues in Queensland. It also gave the community a stronger sense of involvement and connection with the sentencing processes. Crucially, the Sentencing Advisory Council was to advise the Attorney-General on sentencing matters and to inform interested persons about sentencing through the publication of sentencing information and research. We know that misinformation and misunderstanding about the criminal justice system can lead to community fears and assumptions that are not necessarily supported by the facts. Reliance on evidence and expert advice when formulating policy decisions over populism and gut feeling is what will set this government apart from the former administration.

We also understand that continuing need for a skilled workforce and, along with the Treasurer and the Minister for Education, I am proud to be delivering for this government as part of a whole-of-government strategy Working Queensland, our blueprint for generating jobs and tackling unemployment. This government is committed to investing \$240 million over the next four years in Skilling Queenslanders for Work to fund local programs that support young and long-term unemployed Queenslanders—programs that give people the skills to work. We are committed to giving people the skills and the experience they need to get back into the workforce, build a career, provide for their families and contribute to their communities. The new scope for Skilling Queenslanders for Work will build on previous success—success that was highlighted by an independent evaluation undertaken by Deloitte Access Economics, success that delivered real skills for Queenslanders.

The Palaszczuk government will establish Jobs Queensland, an independent statutory authority that will provide advice to government on skills demand and long-term workforce planning. Jobs Queensland will comprise a strong, independent and commercially focused board with a mix of industry leaders, experts in market and regulatory economics as well as accounting or financial management and union representatives. Our commitment to increasing the number of trainees and apprentices in the workplace will be achieved through the provision of a 125 per cent payroll tax rebate for employers of apprentices and trainees. We will also ensure that 10 per cent of workers on major government projects are apprentices or trainees. We will also expand that to include public-private partnerships and government-owned corporations.

At 6.5 per cent, Queensland's unemployment rate is at an 11-year high, with some regional areas such as Wide Bay and Logan much higher at 11.1 per cent and 9.4 per cent respectively. The impact of unemployment can be felt right across the state and affects all sectors of industry. For this reason the Premier has made it clear that it is the role of all departments across all portfolios to address unemployment and job creation. I am also passionate about the important role that TAFE has to play and should continue to play in our education system, in local communities and in the broader economy. We will deliver on our commitment to provide an additional \$34 million over three years to the TAFE system.

Queenslanders deserve to have a strong and productive public training provider in the important area of training and further education, and this is something that I have heard time and time again when travelling around the state talking to communities. Young and old understand the importance of training. Young and old understand the importance of a strong TAFE system where they can get quality training and affordable training so that we can have the workforce we need for the jobs of the future.

We are also introducing a raft of measures to tackle alcohol fuelled violence. We have taken on board the advice of experts in the field and the clear experience of other jurisdictions that are successfully tackling this issue. That means we will be bringing legislation before this House to stop pubs and clubs serving alcohol after 3 am and introducing a 1 am lockout. We will be giving police the powers to breathalyse drunk or disorderly patrons so they have the evidence they need to prosecute licensees, managers and patrons who breach the Liquor Act. We will create a new scheme of mandatory bans prohibiting repeat offenders from entering our pubs, clubs and Safe Night Out precincts. We will legislate to prevent the service of high alcohol content drinks after midnight. We will back these laws up with intelligence-led policing and increased liquor licensing inspections as well as education and awareness campaigns. Not only are these policies supported by the evidence; they are also supported by everyday Queenslanders. Research by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education shows over 80 per cent of Queenslanders support 3 am closing for pubs, clubs and bars, and over 60 per cent support a 1 am lockout. Over the coming months we will be talking to licensees, academics and researchers, police, doctors and nurses, ambulance officers and antiviolence campaigners, drug and alcohol research bodies and others as we work to implement these critical initiatives to keep young Queenslanders safe.

Again, I am proud to stand in support of this motion of confidence in the Palaszczuk Labor government. I will deliver on our commitment to the people of Queensland in my portfolio areas to deliver quality training and skills, promote jobs and provide a fair and equitable justice system. I want to return decency and respect to dealings with the community. Sadly, the bungling by the former Attorney-General is still having ramifications today. Campbell Newman and the former Attorney-General destroyed goodwill and civility in the legal community. Their arrogance and self-indulgence have left scars that are still raw to this day.

The question here today is really for the opposition. Will they listen to the message Queenslanders sent, or will they stand here and defend the legacy of the Newman and Bleijie laws? The proof is in the pudding. Every LNP member voted for the laws that the Newman government put forward. In the weeks, months and years ahead let us see if they have learnt their lesson. I invite them to change their position and support this important confidence motion in the Palaszczuk government and the people of Queensland as they clearly indicated their support on 31 January this year.