




Speech By
Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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VALEDICTORY

 **Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (12.30 am): Like all good things, the parliamentary year 2016 must come to an end. While this weekend we return to our homes and families and look forward to the festive season, it is incumbent upon all of us to look back on the year that was to celebrate achievements, to reflect on challenges and to look forward to the year ahead. The year 2016 has been eventful to say the least, both at home and abroad. We have seen seismic upheavals on the international political stage, not least of which among two of our oldest and closest friends. Both Brexit and the US election have reminded us that political orthodoxy can be thrown on its head.

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. I understand that someone in the gallery above me is taking photos.

An honourable member: They have gone now.

Mr SPEAKER: Thank you, members, for your assistance.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is not to mention an incredibly close federal election here at home, where a first-term government with a big majority was nearly thrown out after one term. There are lessons for all of us in those results, but the biggest one has been something we know only too well here in Queensland—that is, that governments and leaders who do not listen to the people are punished accordingly.

We also live in a world where the enduring and worthwhile ambition of global peace and stability remains an aspiration, not a reality. We live in a world where cowardly terrorist attacks mean we must remain constantly vigilant. We as a parliament have paid our respects to our friends in Paris, Nice and Orlando, among others. We hope and pray that peace-loving people the world over can live their lives secure in the knowledge that their family and friends are safe from terror attacks.

We have also been touched by tragedy here at home. When Queenslanders, indeed all Australians, think of Dreamworld they think of holiday fun on the Gold Coast. So, too, would have Cindy Low, Kate Goodchild, Luke Dorsett and Roozbeh Araghi. Their tragic deaths at one of our most famous holiday attractions is a stark reminder to us all that, while life is short, sometimes it is too short, and it is always precious. Little more than a week later we were again shocked to our core. The attack on Brisbane bus driver Manmeet Sharma stunned Queensland. He was a passionate member of the Indian community, but he was an equally passionate Queenslanders. In paying tribute to those we lost, we must honour them all by staying the course, by working together to create an even better state for our kids than the one that has been handed to us. That is what drives my government and me every day.

Queensland is now 157 years old—or should I say 157 years young! It is an old saying that for some may just be words, but for me it rings true: Queensland's best days truly are ahead of us. We face challenging times—economically and socially—but I am optimistic for the future. We live in a decentralised state. As I have acknowledged many times, our regional economies are not experiencing the same levels of growth as the south-east and that means many families are doing it tough. This year

we have ramped up our efforts to support regional Queensland and get them back to work. Our \$40 billion Capital Works Program, the Back to Work program, Building our Regions, Skilling Queenslanders for Work and our renewable energy revolution are just some of the programs creating jobs, especially in the regions. On top of all that, our statewide tourism drive is about getting more tourists to our state. We have already attracted record numbers of new flights, especially from China, and just last week the tourism minister and I announced a brand-new campaign called I Know Just The Place. Some would even suggest that Parliament House here in Brisbane is 'just the place' and, of course, I would wholeheartedly agree—maybe not at this hour, though.

That is just a snapshot of my government's focus on the regions. There will be more to come in 2017. It comes at a time when our traditional industries are roaring back to life. Commodity prices have increased, and increased rainfall out west is giving our farmers hope. As well as fostering traditional sectors, members will also know that I am passionate about diversifying our economy and creating new industries, especially when they complement existing ones. I am personally driving, with my government, the establishment of a biofuels industry, and with the recent visit of US Navy Secretary Mabus and our investor forum next week it continues to go from strength to strength. Much of that is being driven by the \$405 million Advance Queensland agenda. We are already reaping dividends in attracting to Queensland new businesses like Southern Oil and Japan's Oji Fibre Solutions. A highlight of the year was our Advance Queensland Innovation and Investment Summit, shining a light on our innovation sector and attracting interest from all over the world.

We have also seen a huge amount of activity in preparation for the 2018 Commonwealth Games. With fewer than 500 days to go, the countdown to the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games is on. Our planning and preparations are on time and on budget. It will be enormous for the Gold Coast, and for Queensland, and I look forward to a big year next year in the lead-up to 2018.

While we have to wait until 2018 for the Commonwealth Games, the Gold Coast is already attracting the world's attention. I am a very proud arts minister. We are doing more than ever to attract blockbuster Hollywood movies to Queensland. It was pandemonium on the streets of Brisbane when Chris Hemsworth, Tom Hiddleston, Cate Blanchett and Anthony Hopkins arrived for the filming of *Thor*. I could not mention the highlights of 2016 without mentioning meeting Thor in person! In all seriousness, *Thor* might get the headlines, but the arts sector as a whole is in very good health. We have boosted funding for large- and small-scale productions as well as small to medium organisations across the state. We had the first World Science Festival outside of New York in Brisbane this year, attracting 120,000 participants, and we have successfully negotiated with Marvel for a huge exhibition at GoMA next year. Queensland is a modern, cosmopolitan, thriving community and our arts sector is crucial to that.

Also crucial to Queensland is the availability of first-class front-line services. As we promised, we have returned the focus to the front line, with a record Health budget of \$15.4 billion and a record Education budget of \$12.9 billion. We have employed 1,940 extra nurses, 650 extra doctors, nearly 480 extra health professionals, 940 extra teachers and teacher aides, 300 extra police, 54 extra paramedics and 44 extra firefighters. We have 166 more child safety workers than we had two years ago, we will employ another 47 by the end of the year and we are fast-tracking an additional 82 new child safety workers.

Overwhelmingly the government has delivered on its promises to Queenslanders. Our economic achievements speak for themselves. Queensland now has lower unemployment, higher growth—both domestically and in exports—and higher confidence. I am equally proud of my government's drive to modernise Queensland to help create a safer, fairer and more equal society. Just this week we have passed our serious organised crime laws focusing on all forms of organised crime. We also passed through the parliament earlier this year our alcohol fuelled violence reforms; further protections for domestic violence victims, including a new stand-alone offence of strangulation; a new insurance scheme to provide lifetime treatment, care and support to workers catastrophically injured in the workplace; and the framework for shifting 17-year-olds out of adult prisons and into youth detention centres. We have legalised the use of medicinal cannabis and established a parliamentary inquiry into the tragic re-emergence of black lung disease among coal workers.

We are leading the nation on domestic violence reforms. Recently we hosted the first ever COAG summit on domestic and family violence right here in Brisbane. In a bipartisan nature, the people of Queensland voted to increase parliamentary terms from three to four years. I would like to pay special tribute to the Attorney-General and the member for Mansfield for the work they did on that front. We also received the Barrett Adolescent Centre Commission of Inquiry report and announced plans for a new facility at Prince Charles Hospital. Members would know how important that issue is to me and

other members of my government, and I look forward to helping families open that centre in the next year or so.

Those are just some of the highlights and achievements from this year, and it takes a team effort to get so much done. I would like to thank my leadership team of Deputy Premier Jackie Trad and Treasurer Curtis Pitt for their continuing contribution and support. I thank each and every one of my cabinet colleagues. Individually and collectively, they have worked tirelessly in their respective portfolio areas, often spending a lot of time away from their loved ones. I thank my caucus for their outstanding efforts throughout the year and for their input and their contributions on behalf of Queensland and their constituents. It is an absolute pleasure to work with each and every one of them.

I make special mention of Angela, Kirby, Mark and the whole team in my office. Working for the Premier and coordinating activities across government can be a thankless job at times, but I could not do what I do without the support of a great team. From the bottom of my heart, I thank them.

Today is a farewell for my principal media adviser, Brendan Connell. Today is Brendan's last sitting day before he joins the private sector. Through opposition and into government, Brendan has been a constant source of expert advice and support. Brendan is well respected across the government and the media. Just over a year ago Brendan and his wonderful wife, Amy, welcomed a baby boy, Owen. On behalf of the government I wish Brendan continued success. On a personal note, I thank Brendan for his dedication, hard work and belief. We did climb Mount Everest, after all.

I thank my Director-General, Dave Stewart, his deputy, Graham Fraine, the director-general's office staff and all of the DPC for their efforts throughout the year. I thank each and every single public servant in Queensland. In my view, they are often unfairly demonised but, to my cabinet, my government and I, they are the backbone of good government in Queensland. It is on them that the people of Queensland rely for the services that are essential to their way of life. I like to think that, since our election, we have again made the Queensland Public Service a dynamic, efficient organisation with a workforce that enjoys what they do and takes pride in their jobs, one that is comfortable providing frank and fearless advice and one that is committed to its role in serving the people. Thank you and merry Christmas to you and your families.

As Premier, I do not spend as much time in Inala as I would like. I am fortunate to have a great team out there, working with me in the best interests of my constituents. To Mel and Michelle: thank you.

I would also like to pay tribute to the opposition and the crossbench. To Tim, Deb and their entire team, even the member for Callide: merry Christmas. To the crossbench members for Mount Isa, Dalrymple, Cook and Cairns: thank you for the constructive way you have engaged with the government on legislation this year. I wish you all a safe, healthy and happy Christmas period.

I believe that we are greatly served by the calibre and integrity of the Queensland media gallery. To the regular gallery members who cover us every day and their colleagues across the state: I hope you all get a well-deserved break over Christmas.

Turning to the parliament, Mr Speaker, I thank you for the wise, calm and good humoured way that you have presided over the chamber again this year, not to mention your outstanding stewardship of the parliamentary choir. We look forward to an even larger repertoire of Christmas carols next year. My thanks also go to the Deputy Speaker, the member for Bulimba, and the panel of temporary speakers, who all contribute to the orderly running of the House.

I thank all of the staff of the parliament for their efforts this year. A big thankyou goes to the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, for the impartial advice and support that he provides to all members of this House. I also thank Deputy Clerk Michael Ries, First Clerk Assistant Leanne Clare and all of their respective officers, including those in the Table Office, for their support throughout the year.

I acknowledge the Director of Corporate Services and Electorate Office Liaison, Michael Hickey. I understand that Michael has announced his retirement and that his last working day with us is to be 16 December. I give particular thanks to Michael for all of the hard work that he has provided to the parliament since coming to work here in 1989. On behalf of the House, I wish Michael and his family all of the best for his retirement.

I thank the Director of Property and Facility Services, Stewart Johnson, and his team, including the gardeners, cleaning and maintenance staff for the outstanding work that they do in presenting the parliamentary precinct in such an impressive manner. I acknowledge the Acting Committee Office Manager, Bernice Watson, and all of the committee staff for the important role that they play, together with the Parliamentary Librarian, Katherine Brennan, and all of the library staff. I know that I speak for all members when I give special thanks to our Chief Hansard Reporter, Lucinda Osmond, and everyone in her team for the accurate and highly efficient way that they record not only the debates and

proceedings in this chamber but also the hearings conducted by committees. I thank the Manager of Security and Attendant Services and Sergeant-at-Arms, Michael Watkin, and all of the parliamentary attendants and security officers for the competent way that they undertake their important work.

I pass on our thanks to all of those in the Catering Services team, led by Simon Neale, for the wonderful job that they do. When we talk about a year of reforms, the work the catering team has done in the cafeteria has been nothing short of exceptional. Well done! I also acknowledge the hard work of the Manager of Human Resource Services, Peter Morris, the Manager of Financial and Administrative Services, Craig Atkinson, the Manager of Information Technology Services, Mike Coburn, the Parliamentary Counsel, Annette O'Callaghan, and her officers for all of the work that they do in preparing legislation for the parliament to consider, and all of their respective officers. I thank them all for the important contribution that they make to the smooth and efficient running of the parliament. In summary, I again thank all of the staff of the parliament for the outstanding job that they do on behalf of the people of Queensland.

I thank our police, health and emergency services workers for what they do each and every day. In particular, I thank those who will be working over the Christmas and new year period. It is a credit to all of them that they put the safety of their fellow Queenslanders ahead of precious time with their families. For that, we are deeply honoured.

Like every other Queensland, I rely on my family and friends for support: to Shaun, my mum, dad, sisters, nieces, nephew and nan, who took ill this year but is now on the mend. I would like to say a quick goodbye to my little mate Zep, who passed away suddenly on Sunday of this week. He was a lovely little dog.

Whether it is the stories of this year's Queensland Greats such as Quentin Bryce, Mal Meninga and Lloyd McDermott, our Queensland Australian of the Year, Professor Alan Mackay-Sim, or the everyday triumphs and achievements of regular Queenslanders, the people of Queensland continue to inspire me each and every day. Queenslanders are relentlessly optimistic and so am I. I said that I would be a premier for the entire state, and this year I have travelled from Coolangatta in the south to the Torres Strait in the north and out to the west. To every Queensland I have met along the way I say: it is your needs, your hopes and your aspirations that drive me every day. To those I have not yet met, keep an eye out in 2017!

To one and all, please be careful on our roads, at our beaches and everywhere in between. Please look out for each other, because that is what Queenslanders do. To all my fellow Queenslanders: have a safe, happy and merry Christmas, and best of luck for 2017.