



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

---

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Member for Toowoomba South; Treasurer**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.40 am): While I was welcoming the new member for Toowoomba South and extolling the lack of interest in Toowoomba South by those opposite, I neglected to properly acknowledge his wife, Melinda, his daughters, Elizabeth and Charlotte, and his parents, Denis and Leone, who were in the chamber at the time of his introduction but, for those who do watch a certain blog about this place, had actually departed before question time started. I certainly say to David's family, also somewhat belatedly: welcome to the family of parliament; you are going to be in for an interesting time.

David's wife, Mel, and two young daughters were instrumental in his campaign as well. They worked almost as hard as David did, lost almost as much sleep as he did and were very much a part of the team that won Toowoomba South, extolling the virtues for which the LNP is known in terms of representatives who come from their electorate and who reflect the values of their electorate so very well in this place. To them I also say thank you.

We have also listened this morning to the Premier somewhat belatedly give her half-term scorecard in this place to try and gee up the troops, who obviously all were sent the message beforehand to cheer at any statement that was made whether or not it was factual and to stand up and push it on. What is really the case? What have we seen and what has been exposed over the last couple of months? What has been exposed in estimates? Firstly, in estimates it was exposed that we do have a 'Captain Risky' Treasurer here in Queensland. We have a Treasurer who seeks advice, gets the advice, does not like the advice and then changes the rules about which the advice is given and seeks to change the rules in relation to something as important to the public servants of Queensland as their superannuation that has been put aside by governments of all political persuasions for some generations. He did not even have the guts to go out and ask the public servants what they thought about it. He and his Under Treasurer just issued an edict from on high to change the rules.

Instead of taking nothing, which would have been the proper thing to do from a proper prudent government, he raided the fund. However he did not raid the fund for just the amount that was recommended by the State Actuary; he raided it for twice as much, for \$4 billion. Then he compounded the riskiness by saying, 'Oh no, the State Actuary actually said we could take \$4 billion out of the fund.' When the State Actuary was asked about that in estimates he clearly said, 'No, I certainly did not make that recommendation.' That is risky business undertaken by the 'Captain Risky' of all Australian Treasurers.

Then in a further blow to business confidence he changed his mind about taxes. He went to the last election saying there will be no new taxes in Queensland. What has he done? A year after promising that he will not change the tax on property transactions, he whacked it up on foreign purchases of

properties here in Queensland. At a time when the property industry is screaming out for people to invest, at a time when the property industry is screaming out for certainty to make investment decisions, what does this Treasurer do? What does this 'Captain Risky' do? He risks the entire reputation of Queensland and the certainty of the development industry, one of the pillars of the Queensland economy that is actually propping up jobs and employment.

What else have we learnt over the past two months? We have certainly learnt that we have a minister hopelessly out of her depth when it comes to the child safety sector, and we saw that today. It took half an hour for the Premier to express confidence in the minister, despite being given a full three minutes and a point of order to do so. It was only after half an hour and, I suspect, after reading the online messages and the social messages that the Premier reacted and finally said she had confidence in the minister. The question is: why should she have confidence in this minister?

One can understand the Premier's reticence about having confidence in a minister. This is a minister who twice in one hour of question time was unable to answer questions, was so completely out of her depth that she could not answer questions, was so hopelessly out of her depth that even if she did not have the exact data and facts in front of her, she was unable to explain what her department was doing and how it was doing it. She was unable even to take a question for three minutes. I have been in this place for nearly 10 years now and I do not recall during my time in this place a minister of the Crown, well briefed with all the resources of their department, unable to take two questions and put them both on notice in question time. It is clearly the case that we have a minister who is out of her depth.

As if having an incompetent minister is not bad enough, as if having a minister who cannot answer questions in this place is not bad enough, what we have is a minister who is not delivering the services and making sure the system works to protect the most vulnerable in our state. That is the shame of what has happened. We have a minister who does not know the answers to questions that she should know if she was across her brief and her portfolio about protecting young children.

We have unanswered questions about what happened in the three days after Mason Lee was seen. We have unanswered questions from the health minister about what the health department did to ensure the police were notified about it. We have unanswered questions about how long it is taking for statistics and data relevant to the delivery of services in that department to be provided if at all. We have obfuscation and we have concealment and we have cover-up by this department. Now we have three separate investigations into the tragic circumstances surrounding Mason Lee and the operations of the department, and we have no time frame for the delivery of the answers and the delivery of those reviews.

That is not the case when the government wants to investigate something like the Barrett centre; that is not the case when they want to investigate something like Uber; that is not the case when they have other investigations that suit their political purposes, but in this case there is no time frame for delivery of the reviews that are being undertaken. How much longer does the Queensland child protection system drift afloat on a sea of incompetence by Minister Fentiman?

For as long as it drifts afloat in a sea, so too does the Queensland economy. The jobs rhetoric from the Premier does not reflect reality. With every passing week, the government is taking decisions that are costing Queenslanders their jobs and risking Queensland's reputation as a safe place to do business. We have the Deputy Premier motivated by political fear of the greens movement in her electorate responding to requests, demands and protests to actually stop a project that had been approved, a project that had spent months, if not years, going through a full approval process where bulldozers had moved onto the site and were actually moving dirt, where the Deputy Premier herself said in March there were no grounds for state intervention.

Yet what has she done in a politically motivated way? She has called in this project, the bulldozers have stopped and the jobs have finished. Everyone is sitting in limbo waiting for the Deputy Premier to work out whether she has the best interests of Queensland at heart to get this project going again or whether indeed it is the best interests of the Australian Labor Party and the threat from the Greens on their left.

It does not matter whether it is the decision around the cruise ship terminal at the Gold Coast; it does not matter whether it is the decision around the Cairns shipping terminal improvement; it does not matter whether it is the Treasurer's failure to advance the Aquis resort in North Queensland; and it does not matter whether it is the Deputy Premier's or the Minister for State Development's decision on Great Keppel Island—they cannot seem to work out who is responsible—they cannot make decisions. They cannot get projects going. We are still waiting for the Minister for State Development to tell us what he thinks about Acland. How long has that been going on? Jobs are missing, exports are not being earned and Queensland's economy is suffering.

It is about time this government tried to do more than just soft 'fluff' pieces for the camera. It is about time this government stood up and took decisions that are in the best interests of Queensland and explain those decisions to the people of Queensland, because since the beginning of this year 20,000 full-time jobs have gone south, 20,000 full-time jobs have not been created and Queensland's unemployment rate has risen to over 6.5 per cent. It is only the LNP—

*(Time expired)*