



Speech By  
**Tim Nicholls**


**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance**

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.45 am): It has been interesting to see the efforts of those opposite over the last little period of time. We saw them all marching out from their pep talk at about 9.15 this morning. Columns of them streamed out from small group gatherings around the place as they filed into parliament. Obviously the lacklustre performance of the team 10 days ago left something to be desired, so they have tried to gee up the troops to get them to come out and speak up in their loudest voices. It is all designed to hide the deep divisions that have wracked the Labor Party since this government was elected. The unbridled ambition sitting over there in the member for Woodridge and the member for South Brisbane is evident for all to see, and we have seen that over the past 10 days or so.

Let me deal with a couple of issues that are of significant concern to the people of Queensland and which have not been dealt with and will not be as long as this government continues to focus on itself and not the needs of Queenslanders. Firstly let us talk about what we are seeing in regional Queensland this morning concerning crime. This morning we woke to disturbing front-page reports in the *Townsville Bulletin* that crime in Townsville is worse than ever. Three months ago reports in the same newspaper revealed that people are more likely to be bashed or have their car stolen in Townsville than anywhere else in the state, and today's report reveals that nothing has changed. In fact, things are far worse. Townsville is now topping the state per capita for murders, break and enters, car theft and drug crime, and on average almost 10 drug offences are committed in the region each day.

When alarms bells were rung three months ago, the asleep-at-the-wheel Palaszczuk Labor government held a public forum to discuss the skyrocketing crime rate and the Attorney-General and police minister vowed to comprehensively tackle crime in the city. Three months ago they were going to have a plan to comprehensively tackle the rising crime rate in the city. Just last week Tim Mander, the shadow police minister, and Ian Walker, the shadow Attorney-General, were travelling in the regions speaking to locals who have been affected by crime, speaking to locals who are afraid to go out because of crime and speaking to locals who do not want another talkfest. They want something done about it. My deputy, the member for Nanango, and I travelled to Cairns where the same issues were raised by members of the media and members of the public. Indeed, the situation had become so bad that on the day that we were there residents in certain streets were proposing to set up their own vigilant action groups to protect themselves from the ravages of crime in Cairns.

This is in North Queensland, where this government is letting the people of Queensland down and, importantly, where this government chooses to blame the victims and not the criminals. They are proposing to simply go out there, knock on doors and tell people to lock up. As the shadow police minister said so eloquently earlier today, you cannot blame the victims for crime; you have to get on and do something about it. This is a troubling and dangerous situation that cannot go on. All we heard

from the police minister today was, and all we heard from the minister who supposedly represents the Premier in North Queensland—who is never seen in North Queensland and is certainly not seen to be addressing this issue—is that she knows that something is going on and she wants to have another meeting about it.

If the Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland were actually doing something, this would not be a problem. We would not be seeing this on the front page of the *Townsville Bulletin*, we would not be reading about vigilante groups in Cairns, we would not be hearing about the increasing crime rate and we would not be seeing the papers describing Townsville as the crime capital of Queensland. The Minister Assisting the Premier on North Queensland is hopelessly missing in action and the Minister for Police is dangerously asleep at the wheel. The result is that people in North Queensland are paying the price.

Today we wake up to find that the government is talking about yet another plan to tackle the crime wave. It is setting up a community group to investigate the root of the problem. This is a government that is yet again opting to review instead of getting out there to do.

The question has to be asked: when will the Labor government get the message that the police need the resources to lock up the criminals who are causing the fear in the community? The police need the support of a government that is strong on crime, not like this Palaszczuk Labor government, a government that is soft on crime—a government that will be rolling back the toughest laws in Australia to deal with all sorts of organised crime, including bikie crime. It will be giving the green light to the bikies who are waiting at the border to come back into Queensland. These are laws that have been proved, sustained in the High Court after challenge and supported by all of the mainland states.

In yet another classic diversion, today the Premier talked about wanting to make these laws uniform throughout Australia. I simply say to the Premier: make the laws effective in Queensland. Protect Queenslanders first. Do your job. Do not grandstand on the national stage. Do not wind back the laws that were working. Provide the police with the resources. Do not rip \$20 million out of Taskforce Maxima. Make sure the police can do the job. Make sure the police know that they have the support of the government of the day when they go about doing their job.

As we go around the state and talk to the coppers on the beat, they tell us that the best thing that happened to them in the past three years was the introduction of our laws. It gave them the authority, the power and the wherewithal to put the frighteners on the crooks, to get them out of the state. It was not the bleeding hearts of the Labor Party who did that, notwithstanding the fact that they did vote in favour of those laws. Let us make that abundantly clear.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The member for Brisbane Central was not here then so she might not recall. I think she was marking time at the Nurses' Union. The Labor Party voted for those laws in this place, but as soon as they did they started recanting and winding back. Those laws were effective. They gave the police on the beat the powers and the confidence to go out and tackle crims. The police knew it, we know it and the Labor Party knows it.

**Mr Bleijie** interjected.

**Ms Grace** interjected.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Ms Farmer): Order! Could I please ask the minister and the member for Kawana to cease their conversations across the chamber. The member for Clayfield has the call.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What have we also seen in the past 10 days? We have seen a Palaszczuk Labor government divided, more caught up in its own infighting than in the best interests of Queenslanders. We got a firsthand glimpse of that last week, when the Premier and the Deputy Premier clashed over the provisions of the Brisbane Metro project. We know that there is a problem with buses in Brisbane. We know that they are backing up. We know that this government does not have a plan to do something about it. We had a plan in which we would have been able to get both buses and trains across the river, but this government scrapped that plan, even though it did not have one of its own. It has no solution to the problems that assail 70 per cent of commuters in this city. They catch the bus; they do not catch the train. We have a clear and present problem.

What has happened? A solution has been put forward by the Brisbane City Council because the Labor state government is ducking its responsibilities. What did this government do? The Premier came out and said to the Lord Mayor of Brisbane, 'Ditch your plan. It ain't going to fly.' The following day the Deputy Premier came out and said, 'We want to work with the Lord Mayor on his plan. They can be

complementary. By the way, the member for Sandgate has been working cooperatively with the Lord Mayor on that plan.' Then at four o'clock in the afternoon they were compelled into issuing a joint press release saying, 'There is no difference of opinion between us. We are all singing off the same song sheet. The Lord Mayor should ditch part of his plan but build the rest of it and work with us on the remainder.' That is a sign of a government that does not know where it is going.

While those opposite are fighting amongst themselves—while the venom and vitriol are flying between the Bernays Room and the Premier's office and between level 15 and level 13 of the Executive Building—who is paying the price? The commuters of Brisbane and the people of Queensland.

At the press club meeting last week the Deputy Premier almost unbelievably denied that she ever wanted the job. I do not think anyone believed that! The one bit of truth was when she said, 'I have to be 100 per cent honest here. There is no prospect of a spill.' There is no prospect of a spill because the numbers are not there. The member for South Brisbane does not have the numbers. In the meantime, Queenslanders pay the price for a divided government.

*(Time expired)*