




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.36 am): What an exceptional past couple of weeks it has been for this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government, even by their own low standards. I was listening to them before and they gave every excuse under the sun for not having done something. It has taken 18 months to take action in relation to child safety, an enormous amount of time to understand that the Adani mine in North Queensland needs to get going and an enormous amount of time to make sure that the state's finances are on a sound footing. It is well and truly the case that this government's motto is that they are slow but they are rough. That is all one can say about this government.

Any skerrick of credibility that the Premier might have had left was lost when she jettisoned her one core election promise and finally admitted that her government was going to engage in a fire sale of Queensland assets. The Premier has broken just about every promise she made to Queenslanders during the 2015 election campaign, and she did not make many.

The Premier promised to uphold the Fitzgerald principles, then implemented the biggest overhaul of Queensland's voting system in a generation with 18 minutes notice. Now she complains loudly about the fact that the system might cause her political pain because of those changes. There is a simple answer to that and I have issued this challenge on a number of occasions: the Premier can come back into this House and introduce legislation to reintroduce optional preferential voting, which was the system that was in place and was recommended by Fitzgerald. The Premier changed that system without taking it to cabinet or her party room. She changed that system without even referring it to her own director-general. That is a simple change that the Premier can make.

The Premier promised no new or increased taxes, but shattered that pledge with a new investment tax on the property industry. Only last year the Treasurer stood up and said that there will be no surcharge on property investment in Queensland, but only this year he changed his mind and broke that promise, as well. That promise lasted barely 12 months.

The Premier promised to reduce the size of her ministry. Do members remember that? Because those opposite were all such geniuses they were going to do it all, but they found that there is no genius over there. Not one of them could actually do the work in their ministry, let alone two or three ministries. The Deputy Premier was overworked and the Minister for Education was overworked. The poor old member for Sandgate was not worked at all and still is not working. The AWU did not have enough spots getting the lovely lolly, so they signed up and broke that promise, as well.

Mr Cripps: They still wouldn't give Scott Stewart a go, though.

Mr NICHOLLS: No, he is still waiting up there. I do not know how long he will wait. The member for Townsville—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: No. Unrequited virtue up there; he is sitting there quietly waiting for the call to come.

An opposition member interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Yes, he is in the wrong union. There is nothing as frustrating as a prophet not recognised in his own time or by his own party. That is the problem that they have with the member for Townsville.

We are used to this government breaking promises. They have been breaking them from day one. Remember their promise to combine all the power companies and create two generating companies. They cannot do that. The Treasurer did not understand the competition rules in Australia despite Rod Sims writing to him explaining that it was not going to happen. Remember the promise that he was going to use all the dividends to pay down debt. It has already been spent so he increased the dividends and borrowed the money. If a private company did that those responsible would go to prison—in fact, Alan Bond did. This Treasurer goes down that path. That is another broken promise from their list of election promises.

The grand-daddy of all the broken promises was the promise that was broken last week by Annastacia Palaszczuk, the Premier of Queensland. She broke her promise not to sell assets. I was listening to all the weasel words and the spin about income-producing assets, assets that are employing people and all those sorts of things. I went back to the fiscal strategy debt action plan—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! The level of conversation and interjections from across the chamber are quite extraordinary. I am having quite a bit of trouble hearing the Leader of the Opposition. Could members please keep their conversations to a minimum.

Mr NICHOLLS: I went back to the document 'Our state, our assets', Labor's fiscal strategy and debt action plan. What does it say? It states—

It is a measured, modest and responsible plan that does not involve selling the assets that are so important to Queenslanders.

That is the second paragraph in that action plan. That promise is clear and unambiguous. There is no mention of income-producing assets. There is no mention of underutilised land. There is no mention of that whatsoever. It was a clear and unambiguous promise. On the first page of the plan it states—

A future Labor government will implement a plan to pay down debt while retaining assets in public hands. This will be achieved by not engaging in a short-sighted fire sale of assets owned by the people of Queensland.

They did not say income-producing assets—nothing else. There were no other qualifications around it. This is a pure and simple rejection of that in the policy that they are now adopting. We should have seen it coming because the platform for this duplicity was laid with the typical ham-fisted actions of the Treasurer of Queensland. As the shadow Treasurer says, he was the acting Acting Premier on the day.

What did he do? He went out and tried to politically capitalise on some commentary in relation to asset sales—the old myth buster himself. I have not forgotten about the myth buster—the myth that he can actually do something with the finances of Queensland and has any authority in this government. It was reported on 22 September that the member for Mulgrave refused to rule out Labor changing its stance on asset sales if there was 'evidence Queenslanders would support such a shift'. I table the story in the *Courier-Mail* on 22 September.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail* online, dated 22 September 2016, titled 'Assets sales: Queensland acting premier Curtis Pitt refuses to rule out change in Labor's stance' [[1817](#)].

He refused to rule out Labor changing its stance on asset sales if there was evidence that people would support a shift. He was asked about it and questioned about it. He told reporters the Palaszczuk Labor government would 'consider all evidence based outcomes'.

How long did that position remain unchanged? How long was the Treasurer actually going to wait to consider evidence based outcomes? It was less than 24 hours until we had a statement from the Acting Premier and soon-to-no-longer-be Treasurer, Curtis Pitt. He realised he had made a blunder. I presume the Premier rang him from wherever she was on holidays and said, 'You've got this wrong. Again! You had better send out a statement.' He did not front the media. There was just a statement. There was not even an interview or a press release but simply a statement which led to this headline 'Pitt leaves the door ajar for asset sales sell-off'. We should have seen it coming. I table those documents.

Tabled paper: Media release, undated, by the Treasurer, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Minister for Sport, Hon. Curtis Pitt, titled 'Statement from Acting Premier Curtis Pitt' [[1818](#)].

Tabled paper: Article from the *Courier-Mail*, dated 23 September 2016, titled 'Pitt leaves door ajar for sell-off' [[1819](#)].

He obviously knew what was coming. He obviously did not want to deceive the people of Queensland. He thought, 'After all of the other statements that I have made and promises that I have made are broken, the one shred I have left is that I know this is coming. I cannot stop it because the member for South Brisbane is making it happen.' We know that anyone on that side who gets in the way of the member for South Brisbane gets steamrolled. Just ask the member for Stafford how that is all going over there.

Clearly we have, yet again, Labor reverting to form—Labor reverting to the form that we saw with Anna Bligh, Andrew Fraser, Paul Lucas, Annastacia Palaszczuk, Curtis Pitt, Kate Jones and Cameron Dick; they were all there; they all sat around the cabinet table—

Government members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Clayfield, could I ask you to refer to members by their correct titles.

Mr NICHOLLS: Indeed. I should have said the Premier, the Minister for Education, the Minister for Health and the Treasurer were all sitting around that table. Indeed, Madam Speaker, you might have been in that government at that stage of proceedings when they made those decisions. The member for Sandgate was there. The Minister for Transport—

An opposition member interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS—formerly the member for Stafford. It is hard to keep track of the hopping around. This Labor government has reverted to form. They say and promise one thing before an election, they deceive the voters of Queensland, they put their hands on their hearts and claim to be true to their word and as soon as reality hits they turn around and change their position. That is what we have seen this time around.

We have seen a dishonest government dishonestly take a plan to the people of Queensland that they knew could not be delivered. They have turned around and are now engaging in a sale of assets, no matter how they wish to dress it up and whatever weasel words they use. Their hypocrisy is astounding and the people of Queensland will know that this is the case. This is a desperate government with desperate measures, willing to say and do anything to remain in power to fund their failure.