




Speech By
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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.35 am): As we draw to the end of this parliamentary sitting year and we look at the achievements of this government, we find very little that matters to everyday Queenslanders. We find a government, as I have said previously, that is more interested in preserving its own political position than it is in delivering jobs, in delivering services, in building infrastructure and in providing the future that Queenslanders want. Let me turn first to business confidence.

We have seen report after report which confirms that Queensland's business community lacks confidence in this do-nothing Labor government led by a small-target ribbon-cutting Premier and her 'Captain Risky' Treasurer. What we have seen from report after report is that the business community are saying they do not have confidence in this government. They do not have confidence in this government's policies, and as a result of not having that confidence they are not prepared to employ or invest. We have seen the Sensis report, the Property Council report, the Queensland Resources Council and the CCIQ all highlight a lack of confidence in Labor policies. Today we have heard much from the Treasurer, the Premier and ministers opposite about the Deloitte business report and, as I said earlier, like a drowning sailor grasping at any floating plank they have leapt on board. What they have not told you, and what they fail to talk about today, is the NAB monthly business survey result for October 2016 which was released just this morning.

That report shows that business confidence in Queensland has fallen six points since last month. It shows that on the seasonally adjusted figure we are down six points and on the trend figure we are down one point. That is another vote of no confidence in this government. The CCIQ report perhaps puts it best by listing Labor government inaction as one of the top two factors driving down confidence in Queensland. Since this do-nothing Labor government came to power Queensland's domestic economy has contracted by almost \$4 billion, so this do-nothing Labor government has led to \$4 billion less being generated internally—not riding on the back of agriculture sector exports, coal exports or gas exports, but actual work generated and domestic economic activity. Trend building approvals have declined for eight consecutive months, which indicates that our housing and construction sector is hurting.

The situation is no better for jobs and unemployment. Business confidence creates jobs, and without it the only sector that continues to grow under this government is the public sector. Haven't we seen a return to the bad old Labor days in that regard in the past 21 months. The government has to buy jobs, taking a leaf straight out of the Bligh government playbook when they said they were going to create 100,000 breadwinners' jobs and failed to deliver. What did they do? They expanded the size of

the Public Service, leaving Queenslanders with the tab to pay for it all. This government has to buy jobs because it does not know how to create real ones. Nearly 8,200 jobs have been added to the public sector since Labor came to government, in contradiction of their own stated financial principles.

This year, Public Service expenses grew at almost six times the population rate. Next year, Public Service numbers are forecast to grow at almost twice the population rate. Queenslanders are entitled to ask whether they are getting the services they want. I think the answer from Queenslanders catching rail transport over the past three weeks is: definitely not.

Mr Bailey interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the Minister for Main Roads to cease interjecting.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is a very different story when we look at the engine room of private sector jobs growth. Some 23,000 full-time jobs have disappeared in Queensland in the last month alone, and this year 50,000 Queenslanders gave up their search. Some 23,000 full-time jobs have disappeared and 50,000 Queenslanders have now said, 'It is too hard to get a job,' and have fallen off the list. We are seeing a decline in the participation rate. If the participation rate had stayed where it was under the former LNP government, the unemployment rate under this government would be far higher. Youth unemployment in regional areas is the highest in the nation—and higher than at any time during our term in government. To see that you only need to look at the electorates of Whitsunday and Hinchinbrook. You only need to travel to regional Queensland to understand the scourge that is youth unemployment in those areas.

All of this contributes to the bleak economic picture of how this state's finances are running. Business confidence is at low levels we have not seen since Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser were in charge. I have to say, that is saying something. Bad old Labor makes it return and every Queensland is paying.

Infrastructure spending is grinding to a halt. The Palaszczuk Labor government has dismally failed to deliver the job-creating, productive infrastructure that builds confidence that Queensland needs. This year's budget was a document without hope. It included an almost \$800 million cut to infrastructure. Over the next four years, capital purchases have been slashed by \$2.3 billion. Regional communities are hit particularly hard. In Cairns, the annual infrastructure spend is down more than \$120 million, compared to the LNP's last state budget. In Mackay it is down \$80 million and in Townsville it is down \$180 million. These communities are missing out on the infrastructure they need because this government cannot manage a budget and the Labor members representing those regions are silent about it.

In the meantime, private investment continues to decline. According to Queensland Treasury's own numbers, business investment last year declined by \$12 billion. The value of engineering construction work in Queensland has declined every single quarter under the current Labor government. It is clear, and it is clear to Queenslanders, that Labor has no plan and Queensland is going backwards.

It is no wonder, when you consider the litany of Labor stuff-ups that we have seen in the past 21 months. In terms of rail we have seen a minister in charge of transport who even today will not take any responsibility. In the good old-fashioned Labor tradition, he blames others for his incompetence. The poor old member for Bundamba was given only one chance; the Premier has given the member for Sandgate 333 chances. Let us look at the rap sheet so far this year, because the member for Sandgate has plenty of form. When Queenslanders see the member for Sandgate on TV they know one thing: do not plan a rail trip tomorrow and bad news is coming. They know that it is going to cost them in the long run.

First we saw the signalling debacle with the Redcliffe peninsula line. It was revealed then that, while the red flags emerged about the rail project and final testing was delayed time and time again, the minister could not get to the bottom of the problem. This know-nothing, see-nothing, do-nothing minister derailed the Moreton Bay Rail Link and once again refused to take responsibility. We recently saw the minister claim that he had no idea about a train driver shortage which resulted in hundreds of train services being slashed and blame QR, but QR, according to page 10 of the Indec report, reported on train driver shortages to the Department of Transport and Main Roads. It passed the message across. Once again, the know-nothing minister blamed others when ultimately the buck stops with him. This government has form. Whether it is a Health payroll debacle or a Queensland Rail debacle, when it comes to responsibility Labor and its ministers go missing. In the middle of this debacle, when he should have been working on a solution to the problem, what was the minister doing? Where was he? He was watching the V8s going around the racetrack, having some high-octane fun in a corporate box.

We have the Cairns and Hinterland Health and Hospital Service in relation to which the minister went missing and we are yet to see the report, and we have Cross River Rail—another program, with six new taxes for Queenslanders not being disclosed. This government has no plan—

(Time expired)