




Speech By
Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Record of Proceedings, 10 August 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Achievements

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade and Investment) (9.45 am): The Palaszczuk government promised Queenslanders that it would restore front-line services, grow the state economy and support innovation in new industries and traditional strengths, such as agriculture, resources, tourism, manufacturing, education and health. We said that there was a better way to run our state economy and our state finances. We continue to see evidence that our approach is paying real dividends for Queenslanders.

In our economic plan we promised that we would focus on job creation. So far, we have seen the creation of more than 77,300 net new jobs since the 2015 state election. Our trend unemployment rate is 6.3 per cent compared with the 6.6 per cent rate that we inherited and the 6.7 per cent peak it hit for four months in late 2014.

We are generating jobs and investment through our \$42.75 billion infrastructure program over the next four years. The 2017-18 budget will drive more growth and support round 40,000 jobs in 2017-18 via the infrastructure program and other initiatives, such as Works for Queensland, Back to Work and Skilling Queenslanders for Work. Back to Work—our direct employment scheme—initially focused on regional communities, but it is now available statewide and has seen almost 6,300 people secure jobs as a direct result of this program.

We know that the Queensland State Accounts show a 1.2 per cent trend GSP growth in the March quarter compared with 0.3 per cent for the rest of Australia. Thanks to our economic plan, that is the best quarterly outcome in five years. In the final full year of the former government, we saw 1.4 per cent growth. In our first full year—in 2015-16—we delivered 2.4 per cent growth. We have moved to 2.7 per cent growth and we are expected to reach three per cent growth across the forward estimates.

We have lowered general government sector debt by \$14.7 billion—more than what was expected and forecast under the last budget of the member for Clayfield. We saw how the fake budget emergency scare tactics backfired when the ratings agency Moody's applied a negative outlook to our state after the first budget of the former government. In contrast, our disciplined and deliberate approach has paid off. Moody's has affirmed its Aa1 rating and upgraded us to a stable outlook. S&P Global has affirmed its AA+ rating and upwards rating pressure could occur for the next two years. Given the detailed analysis that both agencies applied to our state finances and our economic plan, these are significant outcomes.

We have kept our commitment not to sell our income-generating state assets. They remain in public hands and we are making them work for Queenslanders, especially in the energy sector, where government ownership has allowed us to put downward pressure on prices. On that subject, I reject the comments made by the Prime Minister yesterday. He repeated the false claims about Queensland's government owned generators gaming the system. The facts are that the southern states have privatised power bodies. They are facing 19 per cent price rises in the ACT and South Australia, 11 per

cent in New South Wales and nearly 10 per cent in Victoria. It is because we have kept our power generators in public hands that Queensland has the lowest average price increases in a broken national electricity market at 3.3 per cent.

If we did not own Ergon and Energex, we would have been unable direct those businesses not to appeal against an AER ruling in late 2015 that, if successful, would have seen prices jump. We would not have been able to direct Stanwell to examine its operations in the national market. How can the Prime Minister attack Queensland when our state has had the lowest wholesale prices since March this year and they will be the lowest for the next three years in the wholesale futures market?

To tackle housing affordability we boosted the \$15,000 First Home Owners' Grant to \$20,000 for people buying dwellings up to the value of \$750,000. Around 5,700 grants worth more than \$114 million have been approved, with more to come as purchases proceed. This helps lift home ownership and support building industry jobs. More than \$650 million of investment has come under our MLP framework and we have successfully launched our Social Benefit Bonds Pilot Program. Under the Business Development Fund we have delivered \$40 million to invest between \$125,000 and \$2.5 million, matched by funding from the private sector, to help businesses. We have now seen 13 Queensland businesses receive investments totalling nearing \$15 million.

This government has kept the commitments it made to Queenslanders and as a result we can very clearly say Queensland's growth is up, our domestic economy is recovering, unemployment is down and we have created 77,300 net new jobs, debt is down, three state budget surpluses have been delivered, confidence is up, exports are up and front-line services have been restored. Queenslanders have a lot to be proud of and a right to have a real sense of optimism. We are looking forward to the future.