




Speech By
Tim Nicholls

MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD

Record of Proceedings, 8 August 2017

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Performance

 **Mr NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.54 am): I want to clarify a few things that have been said this morning by those opposite who should know better, although knowing better is not something that one normally expects from those opposite in any way, shape or form. The situation around the new generation rollingstock is not as you would believe from those opposite who delivered us trains without seats, trains without air conditioning and then air-conditioning units that were too big to fit in the tunnels and, importantly, from the Premier, who, as transport minister, cut the order for new trains from just over 100 to just over 60 in her final term in government, who failed to deliver trains to meet the needs of Queensland and who, on leaving government, left us with the mess to clean up.

Here is the situation: a government that concentrates on cover-ups, on redactions and on not releasing reports will not tell you that in December 2011 the then Blich government approved the business case for the NGR project including \$2.11 billion of capital funding, excluding the ongoing maintenance costs, and the short-listing of two proponents—Bombardier Transportation Australia and Advance Rail. In December 2012 Projects Queensland, which at the time was headed by Mr David Stewart, the now head of the Premier's department—the director-general of the Premier and Cabinet—and TMR under Mr Neil Scales, the now director-general of the department of transport, recommended procurement with the two short-listed proponents and a revised request for proposal was issued in March 2013. The proponents submitted proposals in August 2013 and they were reviewed by the evaluation panel—not politicians, not elected representatives but by the evaluation panel—and Bombardier's proposal was identified as superior and innovative and, in comparison to the public sector comparator—that is, the public sector comparator that Labor established—met the requirements of the tender and was able to be executed.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: You are dead right we were in government, and we did it the right way. We did it the right way with the advice of people that those opposite were relying on too who made the recommendations.

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: You were not in government because you were part of the government that failed to deliver it!

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr NICHOLLS: Eighty-six per cent on-time running was the record under that government when the member for Brisbane Central could not jag a spot on the front bench. We all remember that. It took her another 18 months to jag a spot in this government as well!

Ms Grace interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): One moment please, member for Clayfield. Minister for Employment, your interjections are not being taken. If you persist, you will be warned.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Despite the claims of those opposite, Downer EDI was part of the NGR process and it chose to withdraw from the tender process in December 2011. It chose to withdraw. In December 2011 under Labor, it chose to withdraw from the process. In fact, the current Premier, as well as presiding over 15 per cent year on year on year increases in the price of tickets for people on public transport, was the transport minister from February 2011 and should have known what was going on in her own department but failed to do so. She was also a member of the government that presided over the \$200 million-plus *Sunlander* debacle that we had to fix up when we got into government that the Auditor-General spoke about. When those opposite cry, as always they cry crocodile tears. They do not tell the truth. They redact. They hide. They cover up. They shuffle ministers around when it all gets a bit difficult. The only thing they do not do, with the possible exception of the member for Maryborough, is tell the truth!

Soaring bills under this Premier and her Labor government are indeed a serious matter, yet the Premier continues to joke about the expensive prices that Queenslanders are paying for their electricity, with cheap, glib references that somehow even drag in Phil Gould and the New South Wales State of Origin team. Businesses throughout Queensland—from Townsville's zinc-producing Sun Metals, to Gladstone's Boyne Smelters, to Hervey Bay's Consolidated Linen Service, to Bundaberg's Red Shed Seafood and to the Sunshine Coast's Fresh Meats are splashed across the media talking about crippling electricity prices. They are not laughing about crippling electricity prices and nor are their employees.

In the *Townsville Bulletin*—as, Mr Deputy Speaker, I am sure you read—on 9 June, Sun Metals project manager, Lance Moody, revealed a fivefold increase in the price of power. Electricity now consumes 60 per cent of their operating costs and Mr Moody was alarmed. He said, 'You hear about how South Australia has an energy crisis,' and then went on to say—

... in Queensland ... we have the highest wholesale price in the national electricity market.

In the last 12 months what we have seen is really quite alarming ... if you are looking at growing the North and attracting industry, especially energy-intensive industry, then this is really going to discourage that.

Earlier this year, Gladstone's Boyne Smelters, Australia's largest aluminium smelter, warned that it would be cutting Queensland jobs and production because of massive electricity price increases. The general manager of Boyne Smelters, Joe Rea, predicted that production would need to be reduced by eight per cent. He cited one weekend where the grid's wholesale power price spiked at an incredible \$12,641 per megawatt hour compared to the \$140 per megawatt hour average. Just last month, in came the second quarter results and the extent of the carnage became clear. Boyne's inability to source affordable—

Mr Bailey: Forty-three per cent.

Mr NICHOLLS: Just because the member for Yeerongpilly is up in a back dark corner does not mean that he can become—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Stewart): Both sides will come to order. If this continues, I will name members and they will be ejected from the House.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is probably appropriate that the member for Yeerongpilly is up in the back corner. What better place could you have for a troll? The member for Yeerongpilly failed to address the important issue of Boyne Smelters' inability to source affordable electricity, which resulted in an aluminium production cutback of 18,000 tonnes, equating to more than \$40 million, and losses are likely to reach \$100 million by the end of the year.

Our team has been out talking to Queensland businesses and families about the growing cost of power under this Labor government. It is one story after another. The 70 per cent increase in the wholesale power price occurred under this Labor government. Everywhere we travel Queenslanders stop me, they stop my deputy, they stop members of the team and their anger about the price of power under this Premier and this Labor government is palpable. Labor is sending Queenslanders higher power bills, Labor is killing jobs and destroying the state's economy. The fact is that Labor cannot be trusted. After almost three years in office, its only legacy is to deliberately slug Queenslanders to pay for its financial incompetence. No-one should be under any misapprehension: Labor's higher power prices are nothing but a pure and simple tax by stealth.

It does not matter whether it is the Consolidated Linen Service in Pialba, it does not matter whether it is the Red Shed in Bundaberg, it does not matter whether it is a plastics manufacturer at Broadbeach, the price continues to go up. According to Tony Mills, the owner of the Red Shed, in 13 years the price has quadrupled. They work harder, they work longer, but what does Labor do? It continues to drive up the price. There has been billions of dollars in subsidies, and no-one is any better off for it.

(Time expired)