



Speech By  
**Hon. Craig Crawford**


**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Record of Proceedings, 2 May 2018

**MOTION**

**Palaszczuk Labor Government, Reports**

 **Hon. CD CRAWFORD** (Barron River—ALP) (Minister for Fire and Emergency Services) (5.23 pm): I rise to oppose the private member's motion moved by the member for Nanango. Let us talk about integrity, transparency and openness. I want to speak to this House not only as the member for Barron River and the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services but also as someone with 15 years experience as an ambulance officer. I want to highlight the alarming record of arrogance and hypocrisy of those opposite, especially the member for Nanango, who was Campbell Newman's assistant treasurer when the LNP cut and slashed front-line services and axed thousands of Public Service jobs.

I was not just on the sidelines watching on as the former Newman government unleashed one of the most destructive periods in the state's history; as a paramedic in Cairns, I was called on to deal with the human fallout from the former LNP government's reckless policies of cutting essential services and sacking nurses, teachers and other public sector workers. I treated patients who were also public servants who had lost their jobs, their livelihoods and, ultimately, their health under the draconian policies of those opposite. Their complaints included chest pain, anxiety and stress-related conditions, some began drinking and many experienced mental health issues.

There was a terrible impact on their lives and on mine, as well. Friends and colleagues lost their jobs as the LNP swung their axe widely across the Public Service. Good loyal people, hardworking front-line workers, suddenly found themselves on the unemployment scrap heap. Thousands feared for their jobs. Those who had not been sacked at that point were waiting for the razor gang to arrive.

I acknowledge the defiant efforts of the United Voice union, the front line of defence for the rights of paramedics in Queensland. During the reign of those opposite, our union defended not only individuals but also the entire cohort of 3,000 paramedics to safeguard their conditions. As part of the UV union, a group of paramedics and communication operators formed an executive body, a state council, to defend those 3,000 staff. For many years, my parliamentary colleague the member for Thuringowa and I worked on that state council. We fought those opposite for solutions and conditions to improve our front-line services.

I remind those opposite that such was the anger, the resentment and the frustration caused by the then government of the day that front-line service workers such as paramedics, firefighters and nurses had to take their cause to the streets to campaign, to march and to wage war against their government. Those trusted professionals took to the streets purely to try to resolve their wages and conditions.

Paramedics joined with fire crews from around the state to protest as the LNP forged ahead with pay cuts and job losses across the Emergency Services sector. At rallies they joined the QNU, the ETU, the AWU, the CFMEU and other unions because they were angry. United Voice secretary Garry Bullock put it quite well when he said, 'We don't want Treasury officials determining the quality of emergency services provided to Queenslanders'. What was the heartless retort from the LNP government at the

time? They said that hard decisions had to be made. That is the legacy of the LNP. To members opposite who came into this House not just after the 2017 election but also after the election before that, I say: that is the legacy of your predecessors; when you stand in this House and defend them, that is what you defend.

Our government is committed to ensuring Emergency Services have the resources they need to continue their high standard of service to Queenslanders. Let me highlight what those opposite wanted to do during their term in government. They planned to sack 46 Rural Fire Service officers who train and support over 30,000 Rural Fire Service volunteers. They were forced back after an angry backlash led by none other than Vaughan Johnson, the former member for Gregory, who used to sit in this House. They froze recruitment. They insulted off-duty firefighters. As some members would remember, I think it was during the Redcliffe by-election when they referred to firefighters as strippers, saying that they were not real firefighters at all. That is the legacy of those opposite.

I certainly oppose the reckless and desperate tactics of the LNP in moving this ridiculous motion. I compare our record to that of those opposite. Queenslanders made their choice last November. I cannot work out why we are debating such a ridiculous motion tonight.