




Speech By
Glenn Butcher

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Record of Proceedings, 3 April 2019

MOTION

Palaszczuk Labor Government, Waste

 **Mr BUTCHER** (Gladstone—ALP) (5.15 pm): I rise to oppose the motion moved by the opposition. It was great to follow the member for Toowoomba South because I think he just read last night's MPI. I do not know what that was about. It is appropriate that the LNP state opposition seek to discuss priorities and also to discuss waste because just last night their federal LNP colleagues handed down a budget that had deprioritised Queensland and wasted Treasury's resources by announcing measures that will not be delivered in our state for the next two federal elections. I note that the member for Everton said that we developed an app to help fat dogs. It is better than helping fat cats like those do on that side of the House.

If we want to talk about scrambled priorities and shameless waste, let us talk about how the last LNP government in Queensland found a way to waste hundreds of millions of dollars at the same time as selling out Queenslanders' assets from underneath them.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! Members to my left, the member for Gladstone is not taking interjections. I would like to hear his contribution. If you wish to make a contribution please rise to your feet. You are most welcome to during the course of this debate.

Mr BUTCHER: It was in 2015 that the incoming Palaszczuk government discovered that Campbell Newman and the LNP had spent more than \$100 million on a covert plan to privatise Queensland's assets. Usually privatisations involve receiving money, not actually spending it, but the Newman government managed to spend more than \$100 million on advertising, scoping studies and consultant reports to lay the groundwork for a scorched-earth asset privatisation program. The program was called Strong Choices. We know how that went.

The LNP planned to sell Queensland's state owned energy generators, our poles and wires, our ports—including the Port of Gladstone—and our water infrastructure authority, SunWater, all while enriching private consultancy firms by more than \$100 million. The LNP was so focused on selling the Port of Gladstone that it even employed an LNP member as a sustainability specialist for the Gladstone port. Ironic really when the man that they put up ran in the election in 2015 on the platform of leasing the Gladstone port. We all know how that went. I thank the opposition for running that campaign because it has brought Labor back into Gladstone, which has become the strongest Labor seat in Queensland.

We will never see a clearer example of chaotic priorities and wasteful spending than the LNP government's bungled privatisation plans. Additional documents revealed that after the first \$100 million it outlaid during that process, the Newman LNP government was prepared to spend up to a quarter of a billion dollars simply to sell Queensland's assets out from underneath them. The LNP had no mandate for asset privatisation in Queensland. Just like in last night's budget, Queenslanders have been kept in the dark by the LNP yet again.

Looking back on the LNP's quarter of a billion dollar Strong Choices program, we might as well call it 'wrong choices'. We know that asset sales—much like the LNP—have consistently failed to deliver on their promises. The contrast with the Palaszczuk Labor government could not be any starker. By keeping Queensland's assets in hands, the Palaszczuk government has been able to reduce costs for Queensland electricity customers. As the great Minister Lynham has recently said in this House, Queensland now has the lowest typical household power prices of any mainland state.

I acknowledge Minister Lynham sitting here tonight, because he has been a staunch supporter of lowering power prices in Queensland. Most Queenslanders now know exactly what a Labor government can do. We owe our low power bills to Queensland's publicly owned energy networks. While privatised power networks in other states have seen higher prices and rolling blackouts, Queensland has certainly kept the lights on. Our predecessors in the state LNP embarked on a privatisation plan that would have spent, not saved, up to a quarter of a billion dollars in waste. Queenslanders deserve more for their money than to see their assets sold off right underneath their feet.

Queenslanders deserve a government that shares their priorities, keeps their assets in public hands and does not simply resort to the failed LNP mantra of cut, sack and sell.