




Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 1 September 2021

MOTION

Palaszczyk Labor Government, Ipsos Polling Data; Order to Table Documents

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (5.46 pm): I rise to oppose this obviously very important motion! It is unbelievable that this group of people come in here and complain that they do not have enough time. They whinge and complain, yet these are the sorts of things that they come up with. I look at the brains trust and wonder where it emanates from. Anyway, I will move on.

Those opposite would find this market research difficult because this is what governments do and they are not one so I will explain a few things. These are unprecedented times and they have meant that—

Opposition members interjected.

An opposition member: Let's see what the people of Cairns think.

Mr HEALY: We did, last October. They thought very well, actually. These unprecedented times have meant that governments at all levels have had to ask their communities to do things they have never had to do before. Strong actions such as border closures and lockdowns once seemed unimaginable, but as we heard a while ago these are unprecedented times. We are seeing governments across the Commonwealth give necessary and absolutely unheard of instructions to their communities. It is absolutely unbelievable that we are doing that, but it is essential to protect lives. We have only to look at what is happening south of the border to see that. If you cannot understand that, you are a long way from getting it.

I refer to some of the comments we have heard in this place in relation to the Premier, her leadership and her not wanting to get a jab. What an absolute joke! She could walk on water and they would complain that she could not swim. People opposite have absolutely no understanding. Properly communicating these important public health messages in the constantly shifting climate of this pandemic has been a key part of our success in tackling the virus so far. Something those opposite would not recognise—and we have heard it from previous speakers on this side—is that all governments around Australia, including the Morrison government, conduct research to ensure efficient communication, particularly during a COVID-19 pandemic. If my memory serves me correctly, Scott Morrison learnt that the hard way. Around about 20 years ago, he orchestrated the 'Where the bloody hell are you?' campaign. He did not do any market research, it was a disaster and he lost his job. It is good that he has learnt something.

The reality is that engaging with communities and finding out the appropriate ways to get the message across is absolutely fundamental. As we have heard, the Commonwealth government conducts millions of dollars worth of research each year. For those who came up with this fantastic concept, I would say: please look a little broader. It happens in a wide range of areas in government. The market research is used to shape use of language, to target audiences, to identify where audiences are and to get the appropriate information, and it determines the public's responsiveness to COVID-19.

It was revealed that last year the Commonwealth paid \$5 million to Crosby Textor to conduct government research. What do those opposite think about that? Do they think that money could have been used somewhere else? An article published in the *Australian* last October made it clear that the federal government is spending \$135 million on COVID messaging. With over \$100 million being spent by the federal government on sentiment testing, you would think the federal government would be a little more aware of what people are thinking. That amount of money is scary, but those opposite drag up this little issue here.

Surely those opposite would be aware that, for example, the tourism industry in Queensland is on its knees and needs the federal government to reinstate JobKeeper. I know that our tourism minister has written to the federal minister, backing the calls of our industry in Queensland for the federal government to provide a JobKeeper style wage subsidy, accessible by Queensland's tourism and hospitality industries. You do not need market research for that; it is pretty obvious.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr HEALY: Why would they take on the responsibility of wage subsidy 12 months ago but now walk away from it, knowing there is an industry going through what it is?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Order! Pause the clock. Resume your seat, please, member.

Mr HEALY: Bugger. I was on a roll. Sorry.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, members! I warn the member for Buderim. I ask the member for Cairns to withdraw that unparliamentary language.

Mr HEALY: I withdraw. With all the sentiment testing that is going on in the federal government, one would be aware that New South Wales and Victoria being locked out is having a significant and detrimental impact on what is happening up here. It is the responsibility of the federal government. They do not need market research. We need them to step up and fulfil the responsibility they took on 12 months ago. They have not done it. It is impacting. We are doing everything as a state government. We have spent a billion dollars on the tourism sector and we will continue to invest more as we come out of this. We will need to have flights subsidised and we will need to have marketing campaigns. I tell you what: in some areas the federal government does not need to do market research.