



Speech By  
**Fiona Simpson**


**MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Palaszczuk Labor Government, Polling**

 **Ms SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—LNP) (2:16 pm): There are grave concerns that the secret taxpayer funded polling commissioned by the Palaszczuk state Labor government, at a cost of nearly \$400,000, is being used for political purposes and not the public interest, and that is to try and entrench themselves and desperately hold on to power. If this polling was designed to deliver better services then why would they not release it? It is because it is to serve Labor rather than Queenslanders. This is an abuse of power and an abuse of public trust, and it has implications in relation to accountability and transparency. Both the *Australian* newspaper and LNP state opposition have lodged right to information requests for these polling sentiment surveys, but the government has blocked access to these documents allegedly due to cabinet-in-confidence exemptions. This flies in the face of the Premier's promise 500 days ago to release cabinet documents within 30 days under the pressure of the integrity scandal and the *Let the sunshine in* Coaldrake report. We are still waiting for this to occur. It is still pretty—not sunshiny but cloudy about the small print in the Premier's promise and what is or is not included in the program of release.

The government has admitted that the release of cabinet documents does not require legislative change as it only requires an administrative process, thus it is the Premier's choice to block the release of taxpayer funded secret polling today. The only barrier to transparency is the Premier. If the Premier is going to accept the Coaldrake recommendations lock, stock and barrel as she claimed, then stop blocking access to these polling documents rather than wheeling them through cabinet to bury them from public view. Is it the Premier's intention to keep using public money on polling for her government's purposes—not the public interest—and keep it secret without a legitimate reason to do so? That appears to be the case.

While the opposition's RTI request was completely blocked by the state government, the *Australian* received a heavily redacted response to their request which revealed that the polling contract was not just for budget measures this year, as the government claimed and as the Premier claimed in question time this morning. The Ipsos polling is due to run up until the state election next year—over 66 weeks—not just in the lead-up to the state budget this year. The contract says that polling would 'draw out Queenslanders' views across a range of current issues and topics'. It says—

With topics chosen where there is a need to deep-dive into understanding of the community preferences, perception, resonance, unintended meanings, thoughts on use of language, clarity, and conciseness.

Thus this was not just about the June budget; it is an ongoing piece of work. Isn't the government an ongoing piece of work!

Ipsos—which was contracted for nearly \$400,000 on 9 May this year—was engaged only a couple of weeks after public polls indicated that Labor was on the nose in Queensland. The Ipsos polling contract was signed off by assistant director-general Michelle Wellington, a former Labor political staffer

who previously worked as the Premier's media adviser. This contract was on top of the \$528,000 of taxpayers' money on polling voter sentiment about COVID-19 restrictions with Ipsos before the 2020 election which the state government also refused to release. The state Labor government limits by law what its opponents can spend with non-taxpayer funds on election campaigns, while Labor digs deep into taxpayers' pockets to run secret polls which inform publicly funded advertising campaigns which in turn align with Labor's election campaign material.

Let us not forget that this state Labor government also embedded Labor lobbyists who ran their election campaign before the last election using 1 William Street, the government's executive building. They are shameless. They are like a Third World junta with regard to their culture of cover-up, bullying, whistleblowers and obsession with serving themselves rather than the people. This is a government of chaos and crisis but also of cover-up. Labor are focused on themselves rather than Queenslanders, using taxpayers' funds to fix their image rather than fix the problems. They are ruling rather than serving. They simply do not have the right priorities for Queensland's future.