



QUEENSLAND
GOVERNMENT

The opening
of the
first session
of the
fifty-fourth Parliament

Governor's speech

16 May 2012

Governor's speech for the opening of Parliament 16th May 2012

Honourable members, on this significant occasion, the opening of the first session of the 54th Parliament, I wish to congratulate you on your election as representatives of the people of Queensland.

You have been entrusted with a responsibility to uphold and maintain the basic principles of our parliamentary democracy—representative and responsible government. Each of you will play an important role in considering and making decisions on matters relating to the welfare and prosperity of this great state.

Following the general state election on 24 March 2012, the Ministry led by the Honourable Anna Bligh tendered its resignation from office, whereby I invited the Honourable Campbell Newman to form an administration. Mr Newman was accordingly sworn in as Premier on 26 March 2012, followed by the swearing-in of the new Ministry on 3 April 2012.

My government was elected with a clear and historic mandate for change. An ambitious action plan has been developed to deliver five pledges made to Queenslanders: to grow a four pillar economy, lower the cost of living for families by cutting waste, deliver better infrastructure and better planning, revitalise front line services for families, and restore accountability in government.

Machinery-of-government changes have already been implemented and work has commenced on the legislative amendments necessary to ensure these important initiatives are delivered without delay.

In addition, the implementation of a number of cost saving measures across government departments will see these savings redirected towards services for the community. Public sector expenditure cost saving measures include a 20 per cent reduction in travel expenditure and the cessation of non-essential advertising, which will assist my government to deliver improved services and cost of living savings for Queenslanders.

In support of a strong and independent public service, which will be focused on progression of these important initiatives, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will play a critical role in reforming the Queensland public sector to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

My government has taken into consideration the forward estimates and the current and future budget deficits. It has determined that Queensland is in uncharted waters with the volume of debt and the cost of interest.

The state of Queensland's finances has been exposed, and the current position is unsustainable with our debt headed for unprecedented levels.

It is only by reining in government spending, waste and duplication that my government will, over time, be able to address Queensland's budgetary issues.

My government is committed to growing a balanced four pillar economy as it looks to the future to restore hope and opportunity, and to build a better Queensland.

The economic challenges of tomorrow will only be met through the reforms my government undertakes now.

Importantly, it is committed to reducing unemployment to four per cent in six years. This target is underpinning all of my government's work.

Recognising that small business plays a vital role within the Queensland economy and employs hundreds of thousands of people, my government will expand the payroll tax exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$1.6 million over six years.

Given the challenges confronting the state, the Independent Commission of Audit, appointed within the first week of government, has commenced its important work. Led by the former federal Treasurer Peter Costello, it has been established to review the state's budgetary position in an effort to regain Queensland's fiscal strength and AAA credit rating.

A total of \$86 million has been committed over the next six years to implement the reforms of the Skills and Training Taskforce to address skills shortages and deliver more Queenslanders qualified and employed in careers contributing to our four pillar economy.

The resources sector is a cornerstone of our economy, particularly in regional areas. My government will ensure Queensland benefits from growth in the resources sector and that it develops in a responsible and orderly fashion. My government recognises the need for sustainable growth in this sector and the importance of it being a safe place to work.

The priorities in this area for my government are to address pressing skills shortages, improve the efficiency of regulatory and approval processes, restore confidence in the sector's social licence to operate and, restore Queensland's reputation as a preferred destination for investment.

Land and water are fundamental building blocks of our environment, communities and economy. The natural resource management policies of my government will plan for their prudent conservation and utilisation. My government will manage our natural resources in a transparent and accountable way, based on science and equity.

My government sees an urgent need for the management of natural resources to return to a more balanced approach. The needs of regional communities are particularly important and the many challenges facing regional Queensland are recognised.

My government will deliver the election policy on science and innovation for economic success and oversee mechanisms for research and development coordination and planning and innovation across sectors involving government agencies, universities and industry, including international collaborations, to improve Queensland's economic performance.

My government has a comprehensive plan for agriculture in Queensland. Agriculture is one of the four pillars to reinvigorate our economy and improve the prosperity of this state.

This plan includes the doubling of Queensland's food production by 2040—working with industry groups, communities and stakeholders to help identify investment and job opportunities, guide infrastructure planning and ensure food security for Queensland for the next three decades.

My government has created a stand-alone agriculture department that will provide world class extension and support services and set clear targets for research and development and engage with industry groups to work cooperatively for outcomes, rather than red tape.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry will be focused on production, helping producers, protecting existing, and identifying future, strategic cropping land and minimising risks from exotic pests and diseases.

My government will prioritise investment in major transport routes for agricultural products to ensure access to heavy transport options for our important agricultural industries.

The protection of strategic cropping land across Queensland under an improved system of statutory regional plans will involve extensive local community input.

Front line biosecurity services will be revitalised by the employment of an additional 15 biosecurity officers to boost the protection for our agriculture industry. These biosecurity officers will help protect Queensland against both animal and plant threats.

Tourism has been identified as one of the four pillars of a stronger Queensland economy that will drive the state's growth and prosperity.

My government has set a goal to double visitor expenditure in the state to \$30 billion by 2020.

The first step in achieving this target is the DestinationQ tourism forum that will be held in Cairns at the end of June.

This will be the first major tourism conference in Queensland in our recent history and will bring together all sectors of the industry and key ministers to work together in developing a roadmap for a future where this state will be the nation's leader in tourism and events.

Pride of place in the future will be the exciting Commonwealth Games in 2018 on the Gold Coast. This international sporting event will not only deliver a \$2 billion boost to our economy but it will also create 30,000 jobs. Small business is vital to the Queensland economy. It not only comprises 85 per cent of the tourism industry, but also employs more than one million Queenslanders.

By developing a healthy and vibrant tourism industry my government will not only bring hope and certainty to these hardworking businesses, but it will also create more employment opportunities in all regions of the state.

My government is keenly aware of the impact that red tape and unnecessary environmental regulation has on business and industry. It will promote a culture that ensures the reduction of red tape by 20 per cent to promote business activity and stimulate industry, while maintaining high environmental standards. It has already acted quickly to ensure the previous government's waste levy is to be repealed.

As part of this commitment, my government stated that, within 30 days of coming to office, it would move to reduce red tape for property owners and real estate agents.

The necessary legislative amendments are currently being drafted to repeal the Sustainability Declaration. This will mean changes to both the *Building Act 1975* and the *Property and Motor Dealers Act 2000* to reduce this legislative burden on home owners and the real estate industry.

The construction industry locally is in urgent need of assistance to make it once again a major driver of employment and to grow the Queensland economy. My government intends to rebuild confidence in the building and construction industry.

A key priority for my government is to address the cost of living for Queensland families by cutting waste and delivering a package of measures to reduce the impact of the rising cost of living.

It has a commitment to reducing the cost of living at a time when many Queensland families are struggling to meet rising costs.

My government has already moved to reinstate stamp duty concessions for a principal place of residence, saving Queenslanders up to \$7000 when they purchase an average family home.

In its first 30 days, my government acted immediately to freeze the standard domestic electricity tariff (Tariff 11) and took steps to reduce the impact of increasing water prices.

My government has a vision for innovation, efficiency and development in the energy sector. This will secure Queensland's economic future and deliver opportunities to all Queenslanders.

With the imposition of the Commonwealth Government's carbon tax from 1 July 2012, steps have been taken to have the carbon tax cost clearly labelled on electricity bills.

These initiatives, combined with a freeze on car registration fees during the first term of government, will provide welcome relief for families.

In the public transport sector, my government will be passenger focused by providing affordable, frequent and reliable public transport services. The scheduled 15 per cent public transport fare increases will be halved, and regular commuters will be rewarded with the reintroduction of discounted weekly fares for regular commuters using *go* cards, by making the tenth journey each week and subsequent journeys free.

When it comes to the development of our state, Queensland is at a crossroads. By investing in the development of our state now, we take advantage of this once in a generation opportunity to ensure our future needs are met.

Providence has determined Queensland's resource holdings are the envy of the world. However, untapped resources must be extracted in a way that brings maximum benefit to all the people of Queensland, and minimises the impact on our environment and way of life.

My government's core focus must be growing the business of Queensland for the benefit of all Queenslanders. It is understood that before we can invest more money in our state, we need to earn more for our state. This can only be accomplished by increasing our business and developing our resource base.

To accomplish this, my government has established the Department of State Development, Infrastructure and Planning dedicated to developing Queensland.

It is determined to achieve the right balance between ensuring world's best practice in the delivery of projects with the real need to reduce the time it takes for projects to gain approvals.

In education, my government will invest an extra \$115 million over and above existing funding through the Building our Future Schools Fund to build better school infrastructure for Queensland children.

My government will return power to councils across the state, to build a Queensland at the community level that is strong, resourceful and independent. It will ensure that councils are set up to lead, so Queenslanders know they can rely on smart, effective and local solutions to local problems.

A Boundaries Commissioner will be appointed to examine local government boundaries for interested councils.

Additionally, my government will identify and transfer state planning powers to local councils to make it easier to build this great state.

By giving councils a high level of autonomy, authority, accountability and responsibility to plan and manage the growth of local communities, the Queensland Government will lift the unnecessary burden of bureaucracy and costs that have been stifling enterprise at all levels of the community. Removing the waste tax on 1 July 2012 is a big step towards that goal.

Honourable Members, my government is committed to meeting the challenge of delivering a Queensland where the benefits of economic prosperity and population growth are enjoyed in parallel with a healthy environment. Queensland's national parks and marine parks contain some of the world's most remarkable, beautiful and naturally diverse places.

To ensure this balance is achieved, my government has created new departments with a dedicated focus on environment and heritage, national parks, and natural resources.

Priority tasks on my government's environmental agenda include the development of a bioregion management plan for Cape York. This will secure the cape's environmental values, while balancing appropriate development opportunities for the benefit of all those Queenslanders who live and work there, and particularly for Indigenous people.

High priority is also being given to cross-agency projects, such as the elimination of duplication and double-handling of environmental assessment and approval processes by the Commonwealth Government.

My government will recruit and train 40 Indigenous rangers to help manage Queensland's national parks, waterways and protected species, and it will commence an independent scientific review of the Fraser Island dingo management strategy.

Crocodile management will be reviewed to place greater emphasis on public safety, and \$26.5 million will be dedicated to a comprehensive koala protection initiative.

Current funding for the Healthy Waterways Program and natural resource management groups will be maintained.

As environmental sustainability is a shared responsibility and we all have a part to play, my government will introduce a \$12 million everyone's environment grants program to support Queenslanders taking their own steps to conserve our environment.

My government accepts that accommodating population growth and an expanding economy comes with a responsibility to ensure that environmental standards are not compromised, and it intends to meet these challenges.

It will encourage broad and sustainable community and tourism use of our parks, while at the same time work to encourage greater stewardship of protected areas.

Tourism will receive a boost by improving access to Trinity Inlet in Cairns and the Broadwater on the Gold Coast to create jobs and new economic opportunities for these regions.

The resilience of Queenslanders has been truly tested by the scale of our natural disasters in recent times. That is why my government will commence full implementation of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry recommendations to protect Queenslanders better from natural disasters.

It will negotiate with the Commonwealth Government for better flood mitigation funding arrangements to help the state plan effective flood defences, and provide \$40 million over four years for a dedicated flood security scheme to build new flood infrastructure in regional Queensland.

My government is committed to making safety and flood immunity the fundamental priorities of its 10 year Bruce Highway crisis action plan by committing \$1 billion of state funds for the Bruce Highway on the condition the Commonwealth Government urgently brings forward expenditure to fix this link.

The establishment of a roads to resources program that will grow to \$100 million a year will deliver improved roads for communities in resource regions into the future.

In addition my government will set up a resource community building fund to provide \$170 million over four years and an ongoing commitment of \$100 million a year to build needed social infrastructure in resource regions.

My government will update the Toowoomba second range crossing business case to kickstart this important project in order to remove heavy vehicles out of Toowoomba's streets.

It will also improve safety on our roads by upgrading key major dangerous level rail crossings and installing flashing signs in school zones.

Sporting clubs are at the heart of the community. Ensuring that these valuable organisations can continue to renew their infrastructure and meet the needs of their members is essential.

My government will provide \$10 million to assist sporting clubs develop, improve and upgrade their facilities as well as undertake initiatives to increase membership.

My government will invest to get more Queensland children playing sport by providing \$6 million to assist children who cannot afford to join a sporting club to do so.

My government will rejuvenate the Queensland racing industry and once again give the three separate racing codes real input on how the sector is run. In addition, it will provide \$4 million over four years to fund 20 additional race meetings, \$5 million over two years to bolster the Queensland Thoroughbred Investment Scheme, and deliver the full \$110 million to upgrade racing infrastructure.

Honourable Members, my government's economic blueprint and cost-cutting measures are aimed at improving social prosperity for all Queensland families.

My government is committed to restoring public confidence in our health system, investing in front line health services, reducing waiting lists, partnering with private enterprise, and empowering local communities to have a direct say in their local health services and a direct control over their local hospital.

The community has a right to expect greater accountability from Queensland Health, and it demands greater due diligence to prevent a repeat of the costly and dysfunctional payroll system that had an adverse impact on thousands of health workers.

My government has already shown its commitment to health professionals by negotiating a new wages deal that will deliver a real pay rise for nurses and midwives.

My government is determined to improve health services for all Queenslanders, no matter where they live, by: doubling the patient travel and accommodation subsidy; supporting mothers and their babies by offering home visits by maternal and child health experts to assist with a newborn; and fixing our emergency departments.

A whole-of-government audit of all current ICT systems, applications and support services will be undertaken to ensure taxpayers' money is well spent, maximum efficiencies are achieved and the government is focused on its core functions.

My government has made a commitment to build stronger families and revitalise Queensland's front line child protection services and will carry out an inquiry into the child protection system.

Queenslanders with a disability are a priority group, and will benefit from a \$38.7 million package aimed at providing flexible care.

There will also be support for our hardworking community and volunteer groups, including \$4 million in grants for essential equipment.

My government has made it clear that every Queensland child is entitled to a good education that will ultimately lead to a career.

By bringing together education, training and employment into one portfolio, this government is making a deliberate statement that from the moment Queensland children begin their education journey, we will support them until they choose the career that is right for them.

With this focus, my government is committed to supporting Queenslanders at every step of the education journey.

It has committed \$54 million to providing 600 full-time teacher aides in Prep classrooms over the next four years to give our children the best start.

Aside from extra resources, my government will lift the standards of public schools by giving individual schools more autonomy. School communities will have greater ownership in making decisions that are the best for their school. My government will do this by providing the opportunity for state schools to choose to become 'independent public schools' and assisting them to make that transition.

A holistic approach to reducing violence and efforts to improve the economic circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, is an important step forward to improve the well-being of Indigenous peoples.

My government has given the highest priority to achieving sustainable home ownership on Indigenous land and has committed to review alcohol management plans in partnership with affected communities within 18 months.

Queensland is a truly multicultural state. My government will continue to promote the benefits of our cultural diversity and to support the active participation of Queenslanders from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in all aspects of our society.

My government will continue to provide the facilities, equipment and front line staff to keep Queenslanders safe and secure.

It will ensure front line staff are prepared to respond quickly and effectively to natural disasters, fire and health emergencies, boosting the safety of Queenslanders.

As our state continues to confront significant and enduring disasters, our volunteers—the backbone of our ability to respond and recover—will continue to be supported by my government. A regional college of disaster management will be established in Cairns.

My government will revitalise front line services by delivering 1300 extra police on the beat.

Funding of \$275 million will be allocated to recruit 1100 new police, at least 100 of which will be assigned to the Gold Coast and Logan areas. A further 200 police will be moved from behind office desks, back onto the beat.

Up to \$18 million over four years is committed to deliver two permanent police helicopters for the Gold Coast and South East Queensland.

My government has made it clear that it intends to introduce in Queensland the toughest laws in the nation to send the clearest message to the community that the trafficking, supply, unlawful possession and use of illegal firearms will not be tolerated.

My government will introduce the toughest 'anti-hooning' laws in the nation. Cars involved in hooning offences will be clamped and removed from the road for three months for the first offence, and forfeited or crushed for any subsequent offences within the next five years.

Criminals that lead police on high speed pursuits will face a minimum \$5000 fine and automatic two-year loss of licence for evading police.

Additional funding of \$1 million a year has been allocated to renew Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers.

My government will revitalise front line justice services across Queensland by reviving the role of Justices of the Peace.

Victim support services and the Women's Legal Service will benefit from additional funding, while coronial matters in central Queensland will be dealt with more efficiently with the appointment of a coroner in Mackay.

Safe and secure containment of offenders will be supported through the continued modernisation of correctional facilities across the state and the continued use of global positioning system technology to monitor and track the movement of offenders on continuing supervision orders under the *Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act 2003*.

My government will introduce a two-strike policy for sexual predators who target children, resulting in mandatory life imprisonment.

It will also strengthen sentences handed out to those who murder, assault and evade police and will increase the non-parole periods for murder.

Harsher sentences will be given to those drug traffickers and dealers who target children and new laws will be introduced enabling police and the Crime and Misconduct Commission to require criminals and crime groups to explain their illegal gains.

Youth justice programs and services are a key focus for my government. It has committed \$2 million to the trial of a youth boot camp as a sentencing option for young offenders to help them turn their life around.

My government will bring a new focus on the efficient and effective delivery of government services to the people of Queensland. It will encourage the public service to return to a culture of frank and fearless advice from a professional and permanent public service led by Ministers who are accountable.

A Ministerial Code of Conduct will be introduced that sets the highest standards of performance and behaviour for Ministers and staff, including restoring the Westminster convention of Ministerial responsibility.

My government will reintroduce clear Ministerial responsibility for their departments, in line with the Westminster tradition of departments reporting to a single Minister.

In relation to Parliament, our community expects parliamentarians to act responsibly and with the highest integrity. That is why my government has pushed to introduce laws that will again make it a criminal offence to lie to the Queensland Parliament.

Today, in opening this first session of the 54th Parliament, I have focused attention on my government's vision for the future of this state, and its important initiatives for this term. However, it is equally important to reflect on the importance of our precious heritage and democracy.

Our state and the Queensland Parliament recently celebrated their 150th anniversaries, providing an opportunity for us to reflect on our beginnings and our progress in that time.

And this year we will celebrate the occasion of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Many Queenslanders took the opportunity to welcome warmly Her Majesty The Queen and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh, during their visit to Queensland in October 2011. This show of genuine affection and admiration reinforced the close links that still exist between our state and the Crown.

Honourable Members, I trust you will make every effort to represent the people of Queensland well and commit to the highest standards of behaviour to best uphold the dignity and authority of Parliament.

I wish you well in your endeavours.
