




Speech By  
**Tim Mander**

**MEMBER FOR EVERTON**

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### **MOTION OF CONFIDENCE**

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (4.35 pm): I rise to speak on the confidence motion put forward by the government. I thank my shadow ministerial colleague, the member for Kawana, who said to me just before he rose to speak that he doubted he would take the full 20 minutes, but I knew he would not be able to help himself.

It comes as no surprise that I am speaking against the motion because I have absolutely no confidence whatsoever that this current ALP government has any ability to effectively govern the state of Queensland. On 31 January the people of Queensland did vote and there has been a lot of speculation about what outcome they were looking for. Yes, there has been reflection on this side of the House about that outcome. There is no doubt that many people in Queensland were unhappy with the imbalance of numbers in the state parliament. There is no doubt that many people in Queensland were unhappy with the pace of change that was taking place. May I say there are probably some as well who were not happy with the way some things were implemented. I have no doubt that the people of Queensland wanted to give the former government a kick up the pants, but I doubt whether they really wanted to kick the government out.

Nevertheless, the election result is what it is. The ALP, with a primary vote of just over 37 per cent—just over one in three votes—now has the keys to the Executive Building. Labor is in government not because of the choice of voters but because of the choice made by the member for Nicklin. We now have a Labor government that is ill prepared to govern the state. We now have a Labor government that lacks the experience to govern the state. We now have a Labor government that has no plan whatsoever to govern the state. We now have a Labor government that is making it up as it goes.

My prediction is that this government will make the Bligh government look like the golden era of the ALP. This will be a government that will be great on spin but have very, very little in substance and this has already started. The Premier and her ministers keep crowing on about accountability and raising the standards of parliament. As my shadow ministerial colleague has pointed out, the Minister for Police's contribution to the debate and her personal attacks have already shown how hollow that promise is. This government have spoken about setting new standards in accountability. Part of being accountable is being accessible to answer questions and explain policies, and this government have not got off to a good start. That started during the election campaign when the now Premier would not make herself available for scrutiny to any major media outlet—whether it was ABC Radio, ABC television or the *Courier-Mail*. This has continued now that the ALP are in power, and the ALP have been shamed into having another day of parliament tomorrow so that they have to answer questions for the first time.

During the week I heard a media commentator remark that ministers are afraid to walk through the front doors of the Executive Building and are afraid to answer questions. Only three ministers front the media every Monday morning as they enter the Executive Building. We talk about accountability. What does this government do? It creates superministries, which would make it even more difficult to

keep these departments accountable. It is an insult to think that the Education portfolio, my shadow portfolio, which accounts for nearly 25 per cent of the state budget, is not a stand-alone portfolio. What an insult that is to the thousands of teachers and students. Can honourable members imagine the response if the LNP did not have a portfolio devoted to Education? What would the education union be saying if that happened, yet we have heard absolutely nothing whatsoever.

This government has also trumpeted about appointing an Independent Speaker. I mean no disrespect to the member for Nicklin, but believe me, if the Labor Party had just one additional member, a government member would be sitting in that place as Speaker as quickly as one could say 'hypocrisy'. That is what this government is about. I do agree with the government members when they say the difference between Labor and the LNP is stark. The LNP has experience and expertise; Labor does not. LNP members are competent economic managers; Labor members are not. The LNP is a party of substance; Labor is a party of spin.

The record of the LNP government during the 54th Parliament speaks for itself. The great reforms that were brought in right across every portfolio have been outlined by previous speakers on this side of the House and will continue to be outlined by speakers after me. Some incredible reform has taken place. Let me talk about the Housing and Public Works portfolio, for which I was responsible. Our objective in this portfolio was to ensure that the most needy, the most vulnerable, were housed. We brought about this incredible result: we started with over 30,000 households on the public housing waiting list and we reduced that by close to 50 per cent. We did not change the eligibility. There was no criteria difference at all. It was achieved because we were far more efficient in managing the system. We ensured that we used resources like bond loans and rental grants to our advantage and did so effectively. Today more vulnerable people are housed than have ever been housed before.

We began the outsourcing of public housing management to the community housing sector. Why did we do that? It was started by the previous government when 25 per cent of housing was outsourced. We have increased that to 36 per cent. Why? Because the community sector is purpose-built to do this. They are local, they are responsive and they are holistic. They can provide all the services that are needed to properly house our public housing tenants. The Logan Renewal Initiative is a classic example. It is a fantastic contract that has been brought about in cooperation with the workers in the department who are very pleased with the result that has been achieved. With the contract that has been awarded, this will be a success and it will be rolled out right across the state.

In my previous portfolio we also tried to change the culture in public housing. No longer is public housing something that is there for life for those who do not need it. Public housing is meant to be transitional—helping people along the way—but no, it became like Gold Lotto: people went and got a public housing tenancy and they were set for life, regardless of their circumstances.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** There is no doubt there are many people to whom the state has a commitment for the rest of their lives because they are the most vulnerable. However, there are many people in the public housing sector who are ready to move on, who are capable of being in the private housing market. This is about inequality. This side of the House talks about equality, but it is inequality when there are people in the public housing sector who should not be there. We were trying to change the culture to ensure that those with the greatest need are actually housed and that those who can move on and fend for themselves in the private market actually do that, and we brought about great results. We also talked about the fact that public housing is a privilege; it is a privilege that should be respected. Those who could not respect their house or their neighbours do not deserve to be in public housing. That is why we brought in the three-strike policy, and it has been fantastic. It has brought about great results. I have had neighbours of public housing properties sit across from me in tears asking me—begging me—to get these people out of the house next door to them because of the living hell they are going through. Again, we want to be fair about this—and we were fair—but if people cannot respect a government property and if they cannot respect their neighbours, they have no future in public housing.

We tried to make the rent more equitable, and we did. The previous government had made 90 to 100 different types of allowances ineligible as income when they assessed how much people should pay for public housing rent—25 per cent of their income, but it was not 25 per cent of the income; it was 25 per cent of eligible income. People had to see some of the allowances that were made ineligible to believe it. That is why some people were paying eight per cent of their income as rent. That is why the average public housing rent was \$119 per week. We brought in equity. We brought some of those allowances back into eligibility, but we were fair. We made sure that nobody's rent went up by more than \$7.50 a week because of that policy change. We were fair.

Let us talk about the leave policy of the previous government with regard to public housing. People could go away for 12 months and leave their property vacant while there were 33,000 households on the waiting list. In fact, they could go to prison for a year and we would hold their property vacant and, by the way, they only had to pay \$10.95 a week. They could also have a caretaker come and look after it for them. That was the policy of the previous government. Again, it is unfair when there were 33,000—when we came into power—on the public housing waiting list. I urge the minister to visit her housing service centres. I visited 22 housing centres—all the centres that we have—and I urge her to actually talk to the people on the front line. Then she will appreciate how successful these policies have been.

One of the other great things we did in my portfolio of Public Works was to create the Queensland Building and Construction Commission. We finally brought in a new commission, a commission that understood the balance between the rights of builders and the rights of consumers. We brought in an organisation that was customer centric. We gave authority to the board to make sure that they could make the strategic decisions that were necessary. Now we are seeing rapid dispute adjudication take place, rather than months and months of waiting for a decision with all the heartache, angst and money associated with that. That has now been replaced by a very, very quick process which has brought about great results.

One of the other changes we made came about because we wanted to ensure that subbies have security of payment. We have now made it an offence for builders not to pay their subcontractors. Late last year around \$2½ million was recovered from contractors who did not pay their subbies—something of which they are very, very appreciative.

I turn now to the portfolio that I am now the shadow for and some of the incredible reforms that the previous minister brought into this space. That is why we did not hear a lot from the education unions during the election campaign, because they were very happy with the way things were going. Honourable members should talk to school principals about some of the great reforms that we brought in; they have been absolutely amazed. We increased the Education budget by 20 per cent over those three years. There was the maintenance that took place, with a \$300 million backlog. We gave \$300 million to our schools to make sure that they were safe and a good place to work for teachers and to attend as kids every day.

**Mr Costigan** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I take that interjection from the member for Whitsunday regarding ensuring locals could be involved in that work, which was a great way to stimulate employment. We also had a plan to build an additional 11 schools through the Queensland School Planning Commission and a plan to build more in the future. I do not believe the current minister has committed to that planning commission yet. Not one school was built in 2014 because the previous government had no plan to bring that about in the future. Now we have an empty school sitting at Fortitude Valley worth \$50 million. That has been dedicated in the forward estimates to build new schools in growth areas and the current minister is sitting back and letting it mothball.

The minister had the hide to criticise our government for school closures, when during 20 years in office they closed 139 schools. Talk about a lack of consultation! There is a school in my electorate, Everton Park State High School, that was slated for closure and we undertook a fantastic consultation process. We worked with the school to develop a plan for the future. Rather than just responding negatively, we worked together as a community and it has brought about a great result: Everton Park State High School remains open. We are absolutely committed to autonomy in schools and the independent public school system has been well received. In fact, it has been oversubscribed. There was a high school in my area which was very angry because it was not selected as an IPS. I have four other schools in my electorate that love the autonomy that comes with the IPS. I would urge the current minister to make sure she visits Ashgrove State School and Gap State School and ask them about IPS, because I know how much they like it.

What about the Great Results Guarantee policy, which was one of the greatest policies ever introduced in the education system to channel federal money. Unlike every other state that gave the money to the central administration, we gave it directly to schools and asked them to guarantee that minimum numeracy and literacy levels would be attained. One principal in my electorate said, 'Tim, this is the "if only" money. This is what we used to talk about. We'd sit around and we'd say, "If only we had this money."' Now they have it, and they are absolutely ecstatic about it. In 2014 we committed \$131 million and this year \$183 million.

What about Great Teachers = Great Results, which recognises the fact that the biggest factor in improving the education of our children is ensuring that we have the highest quality teachers. We have fantastic teachers. My daughter is a teacher, and I understand the pressure that is put on state

school teachers. They put in hours well beyond what they are paid for, and I respect their fantastic contribution. We are committed to making sure that master teachers are set aside to help other teachers, and we are also very committed to their professional development. I will now turn to the area of training.

**A government member:** Tell us about TAFE.

**Mr MANDER:** I am very happy to talk about that. Labor has absolutely no new ideas for training; they only have recycled policies that did not work in the first instance. Let us look again at what we inherited: a VET system that was withering on the vine; multimillion dollar facilities that in some cases were only utilised 40 per cent of the time; and training that did not lead to real jobs. It was training for the sake of training. Labor has no new plans. Jobs Queensland is simply the Ministerial Industry Commission rebadged under a different name. We had a plan that lets industries, apprentices and trainees decide where the skills and jobs are; not the trade unions. As Labor continues to look to the past for ideas, we have a plan that delivers a quality training sector that leads directly to quality jobs for our students. Let us not forget that it was the former Labor government—when their friends in Canberra were in power—which was more than happy to sign up to the greater contestability concept under the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform. Let us not forget that the current minister supported those changes to training when it was politically convenient when she was a member of the Rudd-Gillard government. Labor says that it is about job creation, but they want to go back to the bad old days of training for training's sake.

Finally, members of the House, I want to speak about planning. I particularly want to speak about this because this government has no plan for the future. Some of the newer members of the House may not appreciate a process that took place over the last two years called the Queensland Plan. If you want to talk about community consultation, this is the ideal.

**Mr Costigan:** That is the benchmark.

**Mr MANDER:** This is the benchmark. Thank you, member for Whitsunday. Some 80,000 people were involved—

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr MANDER:** I think that some of those 80,000 people probably voted for the ALP. No more than 37 per cent, but there would have been some who voted for the ALP.

This is what creating a vision is all about. This is about the big picture. This is talking about a 30-year plan and about consultation with the electorate. I would ask the current government to make sure they do not ditch this. I was very encouraged to see Labor identity Mike Kaiser say there were some good things in this. If you have not read this, you should look at it to understand how planning should work and how it is possible to create a vision for the future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on the motion. I firmly believe that the Labor government does not have a plan. It has no idea; it is making it up as it goes. It does not have the clear support of Queenslanders, and therefore it should not receive the support of the House.