



RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

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FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT

Wednesday, 25 March 2015

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WEDNESDAY, 25 MARCH 2015

Mr Speaker (Hon. Peter Wellington, Nicklin) read prayers and took the chair at 2.10 pm in the former Legislative Council chamber.

PRESENTATION OF SPEAKER

 **Mr SPEAKER:** Honourable members, I have to report that yesterday I presented myself to His Excellency the Governor as the member chosen to fill the high and honourable office of Speaker of the Legislative Assembly and that His Excellency was pleased to congratulate me on my election.

ADDRESS BY UNCLE JOE KIRK

Mr SPEAKER: Honourable members, I now call on Uncle Joe Kirk, a Turrbal elder from this side of the Brisbane River, to address the new parliament.

 **UNCLE JOE KIRK:** Thank you very much. So far it has been a great afternoon. In 2012 I was here and I made a comment about our armed forces, but I will not today. It has been really great, as an Aboriginal elder, to be invited to this special opening of parliament. It is a privilege when we see that Aboriginals have a part in government in Queensland. It is really a great achievement. As a young boy who came from a government reserve, I know how hard it is to be under government rule. It plays a really important part for all of us as Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal people.

First of all I would like to say that Aboriginal law never changes. It is not like the law in parliament that changes from time to time. Aboriginal law never changes. As an Aboriginal elder, I would like to acknowledge another elder who is with me today, Aunty Valda Coolwell, who is a prominent elder in our community and throughout Queensland. Aunty Valda does a lot of work in her community and throughout Queensland. She is a valuable elder within our community who is well spoken and well respected by us. There are 20 elders here in Brisbane who do a lot of work for our community, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

I would also like to acknowledge His Excellency the Governor, who is new to his job. We know that he will be a great person and a great Governor for Queensland. It has been fantastic to see all the new things that have happened in our state in the last month.

I also would like to acknowledge our new Speaker. It was great to see him on TV last night and how he enjoyed being led by a couple of ladies to the Speaker's chair. It takes me back to when I became an elder and I started to be acknowledged as Uncle Joe Kirk. I go to a lot of government and corporate functions, and they tell us as elders to 'follow that young girl'. As elders, we do not mind following those young girls that lead us to our seats or wherever. It has been a privilege to be an elder and part of our community.

As elders it has also been a great thing to be part of Queensland government. No matter what government has been in, we have always been there. It took until 2007 to see our flag fly outside of parliament. Along with other radical parties that I was involved with way back in the sixties, I was one of the troublesome young boys who were hanging on the fence outside to try and get those flags recognised. We have come a long way as an Aboriginal community and as a people. As Queensland is a multicultural state, we have done a lot of things for every ethnic group and for everybody that comes our way who wants to live in Queensland.

It was only last week that I was taking notice of the numberplates on our vehicles—and it was the former Premier who started this—that say 'Smart State'. We became a smart state through Mr Beattie. But now most of our numberplates say 'Queensland: the Sunshine State'. Sadly, some of us Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have not seen that sun for a long time. Just like we had a prayer a moment ago, I pray that we will see a better sun in Queensland and that it will be a sunshine state for all our families within the state; that we will all share together in reconciliation; that we will all be one as Queenslanders; and that we will have a smart state and a sunshine state. We look forward to that—not only Indigenous people but also all people in Queensland.

It has been a great opportunity for me to be welcomed here again as one of the elders and to acknowledge the custodians of this land which, as you know, has been here for 60,000 years. We have not come from anywhere else; we have been here a long time. Our ancestors were here long before any white man came. We will soon be celebrating Anzac Day, and I hope we all take that on board as we celebrate the Indigenous soldiers and non-Indigenous diggers who fought for our country so that we can sit here today without fear. When the Governor arrived we saw the armed forces personnel, and we are proud that they are serving our country. They represent all Queenslanders.

The Turrbal people of this land have been here a long time, and we are going to be out in the courtyard and we are going to feel the grass and the earth under our feet—just like we still do as Aboriginal people. We still walk on the grass whenever we can, even though there is concrete and cement. Today we celebrate our new parliament, which is a great thing.

I have shared many cups of tea and many platforms with our new Premier, Anastacia Palaszczuk. We love her, and Aboriginal people have a lot to do with her. There are many things we have sat down and spoken about. Since I became an elder I have had many opportunities to share a lot of new ideas with different Premiers so that we can make this a better state for all. Each and every one of us has concerns. Things are not very bright out there at the moment and a lot of our families are suffering, but I know that this new government will look across-the-board at families for today that will go on and be families for tomorrow.

Thank you for our new Governor; thank you for our new Speaker; thank you for our new parliament; and thank you for our new Premier. I know that things are going to happen within our state this year.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the work that the opposition leader and former ministers have done over the years. I have had a lot of dealings with them as well, and I thank them for addressing Indigenous issues when they were in government. As Aboriginal people, we will not forget. We have a long memory and we still remember what has been done for Indigenous people right across-the-board in our state—not only for Indigenous people but also for all Queenslanders so that we can be a sunshine state.

Uncle Joe Kirk then welcomed the new parliament in the traditional language of the Turrbal people.

UNCLE JOE KIRK: That means, 'Hello. Welcome to this sacred and special place for all Queenslanders, and may God bless us all.' May we have an enjoyable afternoon. Thank you very much.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH

At 2.20 pm His Excellency the Governor came in state to Parliament House, was announced by the Sergeant-at-Arms, received by Mr Speaker and accompanied to the dais.

Honourable members being seated, His Excellency read the following opening speech—



I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet and pay my respects to their elders past and present.

Honourable Members, I congratulate all of you on your being elected to represent the people of our State in your respective electorates in this, the 55th Queensland Parliament.

Following the State election held on Saturday 31 January this year I accepted the resignation of Campbell Newman as Premier and invited Anastacia Palaszczuk to form government.

An interim Cabinet led by Ms Palaszczuk was sworn in on Saturday 14 February with the full Ministry sworn in on Monday 16 February.

I am sure all Honourable Members know it is an honour and a privilege to hold a place in this House.

As with every new Parliament there is a mix of continuing and new Members.

Regardless of your levels of experience, all of you will be making a contribution to the governance of our State and to debates on important issues affecting the future of this and successive generations.

This is a Legislative Assembly, which reminds us all that your most important task is the making or amending of the laws of our State.

In this Parliament, my government will embark on an extensive legislative program.

It has made commitments to create jobs and expand training opportunities.

Indeed delivering jobs for Queenslanders will be the major focus of my government.

My government has also made commitments in many areas to restore or improve frontline services.

It will also improve integrity and accountability in the way government operates in our State.

In addition, my government will implement a plan to reduce general government debt.

Focus on jobs

The availability of secure, fairly-paid jobs is central to the wellbeing and future of every Queensland.

My government believes most Queenslanders measure the health of the State's economy on the simple measure of whether they are employed; whether their children have or can obtain a job; and whether training is available for those wanting to enter the work force or change jobs as the demands of our economy change.

To that end, it is proposing major initiatives to help Queenslanders wanting to enter or re-enter the work force.

A Working Queensland jobs plan will include a number of policies announced in the recent election campaign or beforehand.

They include a reinstatement of the successful Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs scrapped in 2012.

Those programs were assessed by respected independent consultants to have helped people into jobs, but also to return almost \$8.00 to the community for every \$1.00 they cost to run.

Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs are estimated to be able to deliver training to a cohort of approximately 32,000 young people, Indigenous Queenslanders, mature-aged Queenslanders, and others wanting to join the work force.

My government will also introduce a Ready for Work scheme to help young people prepare themselves to enter the job market.

In addition to a payroll tax rebate for employers engaging trainees or apprentices, my government will also ensure that 10 per cent of workers on major public projects are apprentices and trainees, and will also extend that requirement to government-owned corporations.

Jobs Queensland will be established as a roundtable group representing those directly involved in business and industry who can advise government on the skills our State needs now and will need in future years, so the government can plan accordingly.

My government values our regions and those who live and work in our many unique regional communities.

It will implement a Locals First program to support local contractors and suppliers.

It will also be legislating against 100 per cent fly-in / fly-out projects, to create more jobs for Queenslanders living in regional communities.

Rescuing TAFE

My government will aim to revitalise our State's TAFE system and restore it to its position as Queensland's leading provider of Vocational Education and Training.

To do so, it will create up to 100 new TAFE teaching and support positions, fund new training schemes in emerging industries, invest in student support services, and subsidise foundation skills courses for disadvantaged learners.

My government sees TAFE as a provider of well-trained workers for our future, and an essential element in our training sector if young Queenslanders are to have worthwhile and viable career options.

Jobs of the future

My government not only wants to generate jobs for this generation, but for the next as well.

Its Working Queensland plan will also implement its Advance Queensland program to reinvigorate research and development and harness new ideas to create secure, knowledge-based jobs of the future.

It will provide:

- 100 Advance Queensland Research Fellowships to foster research on projects such as protecting our Great Barrier Reef and on new industries such as industrial biotechnology; and as well,
- a three-year payroll tax holiday for new companies coming to Queensland as a result of Advance Queensland research programs; together with,
- 20 University Scholarships to post-graduate students each year to encourage women, Indigenous students and those from low socio-economic areas to pursue a Master's degree in specific fields of study; and also
- the Advance Queensland Women's Academic Fund to support female researchers advance their careers.

The government will implement a Business Development Fund to help finance the progress of bright ideas into new products that can also create sustainable, secure jobs in our State.

Industrial conditions

Just as important as having a job are the rights that workers should expect to exercise when it comes to negotiating wages and conditions and other entitlements.

My government will restore basic decency and fairness for workers, restoring the rights that had been stripped from them.

State public sector workers will have access to good faith bargaining, an independent Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and will have enterprise bargaining agreements and co-operation restored as the core elements of a modern industrial relations system.

Most importantly for injured workers and their families, changes to the State's previously highly successful workers' compensation scheme that denied them their common law rights will be reversed.

My government will prioritise safety in the workplace and reverse a number of damaging changes made in recent years.

This will include once again allowing workplace health and safety permit holders to enter potentially unsafe work sites to protect the wellbeing of workers at those locations.

Changes to the scheduling of the historic Labour Day public holiday will also be reversed to take effect from 2016.

Asset sales

My government came to office after making clear to voters its opposition to asset sales proposed by the former government.

It believes asset sales cause job losses and that income-producing government-owned corporations earmarked for sale by the former government should be retained.

To fulfil its promises to voters, my government has already put in place steps to halt work associated with the sale of those assets which contribute an estimated \$2 billion a year to the State Budget.

Debt action plan

The retention of revenue from government-owned corporations is a key element of the new government's debt action plan.

This plan will pay down \$12 billion of the State's \$46 billion general government debt over the next decade.

This can be achieved without asset sales and by earmarking a share of the returns from government-owned corporations to pay off debt while also implementing plans to realise savings by merging a number of power industry organisations.

Infrastructure

My government recognises the importance of infrastructure projects to meet the demands of a growing State and their role in fostering jobs and strengthening State and regional economic activity.

It will release a comprehensive forward Infrastructure Plan while maintaining an ongoing program of capital works estimated at \$9 billion a year.

A new body, Building Queensland, will also be established to assess all major infrastructure proposals worth \$50 million or more.

This independent body will ensure infrastructure is funded and sited where it is needed, and is not determined by political demands or influences.

Building Our Regions

Wherever Queenslanders live, they require infrastructure to meet their needs and the needs of their local community.

My government will implement its Building Our Regions program to better target funds and ensure all regions are treated on a fair basis.

Once again, the proposed funding of up to \$390 million for regional infrastructure including \$200 million in new funds over three years will not rely on asset sales.

Our Great Barrier Reef

While our built environment is important, we must also recognise the need to act as protectors and custodians of our natural environment.

Our State is home to one of Earth's most significant natural assets—our Great Barrier Reef, truly one of the wonders of the world.

The Reef stretches 2,300 kilometres along our coast—from the tip of our State to just north of Bundaberg.

It includes 3,000 individual reef systems, and covers more than 344,000 square kilometres.

My government is committed to ensuring the world can continue to enjoy our Great Barrier Reef's magnificent attractions while our State continues to receive the benefits of the 60,000 jobs it supports and the \$6 billion it injects into our economy.

The reef faces threats on many fronts—poor water quality, coastal development, climate change, and damage from crown-of-thorns starfish.

Our generation must protect it for future generations.

My government has already acted on the dumping of capital dredge spoil within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area in relation to a planned new port facility at Abbot Point.

It has also committed to a \$100 million, five-year policy package to improve water quality.

These and other initiatives—many needing the co-operation and support of the Federal Government—are important to the future of our Great Barrier Reef and the government sees them as priority actions.

Frontline services

My government is committed to beginning the work on restoring frontline services after the cutbacks of the past three years.

In particular, our State's health and hospital system will be boosted through several initiatives.

The Refresh Nursing program will employ 1,000 graduate nurses in our public hospitals for 12 months each over a four-year period.

That will help start the careers of 4,000 nurses and will also mean better service standards for patients in public hospitals.

My government will also boost nurse numbers to improve patient safety.

The employment of 400 new nurses will ensure safer patient-to-nurse ratios in both intensive care and general wards.

As part of its plans to boost frontline services, my government will ensure schools with more than 500 high school students each have a fulltime guidance officer or equivalent.

An extra 45 fulltime guidance officer positions over three years will be created to ensure students receive the professional support and advice needed to make sound career choices.

Jobs for 875 new teachers will also be provided in state schools to help reduce class sizes that have been allowed to grow in the past three years.

The additional teachers will be over and above the more than 1,600 already planned to be engaged to keep pace with population growth, meaning a total of 2,500 extra teachers over three years.

My government's Letting Teachers Teach initiative will also improve our school system and its outcomes by encouraging our best teachers to stay in the classroom, rather than moving to administrative jobs.

Currently many excellent teachers move into administrative roles to advance their careers.

But this initiative means teachers will be able to be classed as highly accomplished or lead teachers with pay grades reflecting their value to students and our school system.

Mental health

My government will expand services available to young Queenslanders with serious mental health issues.

This will include the establishment of a dedicated facility with an integrated school in South East Queensland.

It will deliver services based on the successful approach used at the former Barrett Centre at Wacol closed by the former government.

The rebuilding of adolescent mental health services will also include an expanded range of services in Townsville to service families in northern and regional Queensland.

Tough on crime

My government will have a zero tolerance for those who choose to break the law, especially organised crime gangs engaged in the drug trade, extortion, stand-over tactics, or violent behaviour.

A Commission of Inquiry into organised crime across the State will be established with the powers of a Royal Commission to focus on organised crime and broaden laws to target more than just bkie gangs.

Existing crime gang laws will be reviewed and where necessary amended or replaced with more effective ones that target real criminals, and cannot be used to intimidate innocent people.

Changes will occur only after consultation with police, the Crime and Corruption Commission, experts and other stakeholders.

Current legislation will remain in place until more workable laws are introduced.

The government will also advocate for nationally consistent laws to tackle organised crime across the nation without variance from state to state.

Statistics show drug arrests rising dramatically in Queensland and damaging and destructive drugs like 'ice' are becoming a bigger problem across Australia.

My government recognises the urgent need to attack this scourge and the devastating impacts other illicit drugs and the drug trade have on the lives of Queenslanders.

It will give police the resources they need to tackle organised crime and the drug trade.

It has also committed to take real action on alcohol-fuelled violence by adjusting trading hours for licensed venues; to ensure the publication of independent crime statistics; and to increase penalties for domestic violence and streamlining domestic violence applications and court processes.

My government will be responding to the recommendations by the task force on domestic violence chaired by Dame Quentin Bryce and has already moved to establish an additional portfolio committee of this Assembly which will consider any necessary changes to laws covering family and domestic violence.

Integrity and accountability

A major focus of the government will be on the standards of government itself in our State.

Significant commitments have been made to ensure integrity and accountability in public administration.

Legislation will be introduced to re-assert the independence of the State's corruption watchdog, the Crime and Corruption Commission.

Queenslanders know from their own history the importance of accountability and integrity in government.

The Fitzgerald Inquiry of the late 1980s and its subsequent recommendations for reform helped establish more open and accountable government.

They also established across our community higher expectations of behaviour by those engaged in public life and those on the public payroll.

My government believes these standards have been eroded in the past three years and must be reasserted.

Changes to electoral laws covering political donations will be reversed.

The higher \$12,800 threshold for declaring donations to a political party or candidate will be returned to \$1,000.

The new declaration level will apply from November 2013 when the higher threshold implemented by the previous government took effect.

A consultative approach

Just as important as what a government does is how it does it.

My government has pledged to be more consultative, and to listen to Queenslanders before acting on their concerns.

It has pledged to be a government of consensus, but one that also is unafraid to take decisive action when necessary.

This recognises the fact that Queenslanders always work better when they work together.

My government also seeks a constructive and consultative relationship with the Federal Government.

But it will never shy away from standing up for the interests of our State.

This historic year

Honourable Members, this year, like all others, will see the celebration of various milestones and anniversaries.

Possibly the most important for 2015 will be the Anzac Centenary, highlighting our nation's involvement in World War One.

It is often remarked, quite rightly, that the men and women who served our nation and sacrificed their own lives in such conflicts did so to protect the rights we enjoy today.

The Anzac Centenary is a chance for all of us to remember the price paid by those who have protected our rights and our nation over the past century.

As Honourable Members exercise their rights in the Legislative Assembly Chamber I trust you will remember those who have ensured the survival of our great and precious democratic system.

I wish all Honourable Members well for their service to Queenslanders in our 55th Parliament.

His Excellency then left the chamber.

Mr Speaker announced that the sitting would be continued in the Legislative Assembly chamber, where he took the chair at 2.51 pm.

MOTION

Address by Uncle Joe Kirk

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.51 pm), by leave, without notice: I move—

That the speech of the Indigenous address by Uncle Joe Kirk be incorporated in the *Record of Proceedings* for today's official opening of the 55th Parliament of Queensland.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.52 pm): I move—

That the House, at its rising, do adjourn until 9.30 am tomorrow.

Question put—That the motion be agreed to.

Motion agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Premier and Minister for the Arts) (2.52 pm): I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put—That the House do now adjourn.

Motion agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2.52 pm.

ATTENDANCE

Bailey, Barton, Bates, Bennett, Bleijie, Boothman, Boyd, Brown, Butcher, Byrne, Costigan, Cramp, Crandon, Crawford, Cripps, D'Ath, Davis, De Brenni, Dick, Dickson, Donaldson, Elmes, Emerson, Enoch, Farmer, Fentiman, Frecklington, Furner, Gilbert, Gordon, Grace, Harper, Hart, Hinchliffe, Howard, Jones, Katter, Kelly, King, Knuth, Krause, Langbroek, Last, Lauga, Leahy, Linard, Lynham, Madden, Mander, McArdle, McEachan, McVeigh, Miles, Millar, Miller, Minnikin, Molhoek, Nicholls, O'Rourke, Palaszczuk, Pearce, Pease, Pegg, Perrett, Pitt, Powell, Power, Pyne, Rickuss, Robinson, Rowan, Russo, Ryan, Saunders, Simpson, Smith, Sorensen, Springborg, Stevens, Stewart, Stuckey, Trad, Walker, Watts, Weir, Wellington, Whiting, Williams