



Speech By
Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

Record of Proceedings, 26 March 2015

MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (9.20 pm): Mr Speaker, I start by congratulating you on your appointment to the role of Speaker. I also extend my congratulations to the Premier, the cabinet and every single member of the 55th Parliament of Queensland. However, as I rise to speak on the motion before the House, I wish to make it clear that I will not—I cannot—support a motion of confidence in this government.

As we commence the 55th Parliament and acknowledge that no party has a majority in its own right, it is fitting to ponder the impact that our decisions will have on developing legislation that will support Queenslanders into the future. The LNP had properly costed, detailed plans to reduce Labor's debt and lower the cost of living. Despite this, we failed to bring people with us and have paid the political price.

After some 20 years in power, Labor was a broken record and the song was always the same: broken promises, higher taxes and charges, mismanagement, arrogance and waste. Who could forget the \$9 billion water grid and the white elephant in my electorate called a desalination plant? A lot of other names were given to it which I probably should not use in this House. It has caused a lot of grief and heartache for home owners and residents alike.

After three years in opposition, Labor is offering nothing new. An absence of policies and a lack of economic vision are proof that it is still out of touch and out of ideas. The former Leader of the Opposition has brought the Labor wreckers back—some of the same old tired team that gave Queensland an \$80 billion debt and a Health payroll debacle, some of the same people who sat around the cabinet table and sold off Queensland's assets, the people's assets: the Premier herself and ministers Pitt, Dick and Jones—a fine bunch of specimens, all guilty of selling off the farm without taking the people with them.

Between 2006 and 2011 Labor sold or leased 15 of Queensland's assets starting with Allgas Energy in 2006, then Sun Gas, Energex Sun Retail and Powerdirect in 2007. Golden Casket and Mackay and Cairns airports were next, and in 2010 came QR National, Forestry Plantations Queensland and the Port of Brisbane. Labor sold all of those assets and still created an \$80 billion debt. It offloaded three of them in 2010 in a fire sale, despite telling voters in 2009 that it would not. The woman who is now Premier of this state was a willing participant in this whole sneaky deal.

The motion of confidence in the Palaszczuk government should be a timely reminder to the people of Queensland of what lies ahead. A reduced ministry with many inexperienced MPs selected because of their factional—read 'union'—allegiances and uncertainty amongst departments means that Queensland's economy and business confidence could grind to a halt.

The new Treasurer has said that his approach will be no frills, no chaos, steady as she goes. More like 'she no goes' or, more aptly, the emperor's new clothes. He further states that this Labor government is about restoring the confidence in jobs to the point where, he says, 'you're going to be

sick of hearing about jobs, jobs, jobs'. I bet we will—all talk and no action! We are already seeing job opportunities squandered. In the *Courier-Mail* of 16 March, the editorial, titled 'Open debate needed on uranium mining', states—

The solution will be in creating an environment that the private sector feels confident to invest in.

There is that word again: confidence. The editorial continues—

... what Queensland needs right now—as always—are leaders willing to at least explore economic options rather than shutting down proposals for ideological reasons before even having the discussion.

It continues—

If an open debate ... is good enough for Mr Weatherill—

in South Australia—

who has previously opposed yellowcake mining—why isn't it for Queensland?

Paul Williams continues this argument in the *Courier* on Tuesday, 17 March with regard to the Queensland Labor government reinstating the ban on uranium mining without consultation or any inquiry, saying—

... it suggests Left-aligned unions now control Labor—the very impression a new minority government wants to avoid.

Government members interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: Not my words—words of the editorial. Honourable members, this government has not yet worked out that a capital works freeze actually equals a jobs freeze. Governments do not create jobs; private enterprise does. But Labor does not get it. It has a track record of suffocating our small businesses under 92,000 pages of red tape that the LNP was vigorously reducing. Many LNP members have run their own businesses—owned them or worked in them—and we know that they are the backbone of Queensland's economy.

We on this side of the House know that Labor does not like small businesses. Now it wants to crush medium and small sized businesses by further refusing to unilaterally lift the payroll tax threshold, a move seen as a solid incentive to grow jobs by peak industry body CCIQ. It estimates that 20,000 businesses will be impacted and 4,000 Queensland jobs lost as a result.

Former state MP and ALP state secretary Evan Moorhead is further evidence that Labor's jobs policy is based primarily upon increasing the Public Service when he says that Labor would grow jobs by creating 6,500 new Public Service jobs. There was no mention of small business, some 400,000 of them—the employers of 50 per cent of private sector workers. We all know, though, what sort of job Evan Moorhead is trying to grow for himself, don't we? A new job as a senator in the federal sphere. That is the Labor way: work your way through the unions and get internal party promotions; do not bother with the real world. And so much for supporting the sisterhood. I understand that one of the new female MPs and now minister has lent her written support to Mr Watts, over sitting MP Jan McLucas, because they are in the same faction. How can Queenslanders have confidence in a party that espouses one philosophy yet kowtows to the union controlled factions at every turn?

Inexperience was well and truly on show last week when the Treasurer was exposed by the federal watchdog ACCC's Rod Sims for trying to foist a plan to merge power generators as Labor's key budgetary platform on to the good folk of Queensland. Other energy market analysts including the Grattan Institute's Tony Wood, UBS's David Leitch and economist Joe Branigan also expressed valued and well-opined concerns. Labelled in last Friday's *Courier-Mail* editorial as 'regressive elements of its hastily cobbled-together economics-lite election campaign platform', this immature, flawed plan proves that Labor either did not do its homework or ignored the advice of those learned specialists. I suggest that both were the case. Despite repeated warnings that its proposal had the potential to send power prices soaring by creating a megagenerator with huge pricing power in a market that was already sensitive, Labor persisted. But it has form in this area, and Queenslanders should never forget. I reiterate the comments of the shadow Treasurer and member for Surfers Paradise last week, when he said—

If the merger thought bubble doesn't come off, then Curtis Pitt is going to have to find savings from elsewhere to keep his promise to pay down debt.

I remind honourable members that it was the Bligh government that originally merged CS Energy, Tarong Energy and Stanwell Corporation in 2011 as well as flogged off a raft of Queensland's assets with complete disregard for the owners of those assets: the people of Queensland.

Treasurer Pitt says that confidence is the key. He wants to broaden the microeconomic focus of the government beyond the four-pillars strategy championed by Newman. Now, that is innovative!

Labor had all its eggs in one basket—the mining basket—and, as former Treasurer Tim Nicholls said, we did inherit a basket case. Immediately we went about restoring pride and hope in Queensland's future prosperity after years of hoodwinking and spending like drunken sailors under successive Labor governments. Public commentary about this new inexperienced government has been far from complimentary. The editorial in the *Sunday Mail* on 8 February was headlined 'Keep sight of the big picture' and it sends a warning. It says—

We are a society that is addicted to instant gratification. Long term thinking is the domain of the Chinese. As a result we run the risk of putting off the big monetary decisions today at the expense of tomorrow.

The editorial states that the LNP inherited an \$80 billion debt and wanted to pay a large percentage of it off by leasing assets, saving Queensland \$4 billion a year in interest payments. It made sense. It said—

Why blow \$4 billion a year when that money could be used to build hospitals, schools and fund extra police, paramedics, teachers, nurses, even bureaucrats?

These are not my words but the editorial in the *Sunday Mail*. It continues—

Mr Rickuss: That's the point: it's in their DNA!

Mrs STUCKEY: I agree. I take that interjection; it is in their DNA. The editorial from the *Sunday Mail* continues—

A report released this week showed that privatising public assets actually cuts power bills. So much for the claim that it would create economic Armageddon for consumers.

It continues—

Newman also set about reforming the bloated public service and stopping the rorts in the hospital system. Not in my backyard screamed the unions and health workers who had become accustomed to the largesse of sucking off the public teat.

Instead voters have opted for higher payroll tax, stamp duty and car registration. Where else will the money come from?

Government members interjected.

Mrs STUCKEY: That is a quote from the *Sunday Mail*, so do not verbal me. Alice Gorman in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 10 February—invest in the real world—said that the state's business community is nervous as it waits for the announcement of a new government 'with good reason'. The article states—

The state's business sector is firing. Property prices are rising, clearance rates are strong, tourism is buoyant and small business has reported a return of confidence.

Ask anyone running a business about life before the LNP ... won office in 2012 and they'll tell you it was gruelling.

Peter Yared from the Gold Coast Central Chamber of Commerce says—

What the city needs to ensure a buoyant future is a supportive government, not one that sees business as a cash cow to be milked dry.

The LNP government recognised our \$23 billion tourism industry as one of the four economic pillars of our great state and worked closely in partnership with industry and local governments to refresh and reinvigorate our iconic tourism branding after years of neglect from successive Labor governments. Now Labor says it is going to focus on more than four pillars. Considering it totally neglected tourism, and small business for that matter, this new revelation is hardly delivering confidence to operators in those sectors and neither it should, with plans afoot to tear down ecotourism opportunities and stifle bold new projects.

Queenslanders should look at what Labor did to tourism, not what it says it will do now it finds itself in power with no vision, no long-term plans and an inexperienced team—a team that the Premier wants to protect from rigorous questioning and debate for as long as possible. How can Queenslanders have confidence in a government that does not want parliament to sit? The calendar for the remainder of the year is questionably light on according to senior political editor Steve Wardill. In the *Courier-Mail* on Saturday, 14 March he commented that Labor has 'inexplicably delayed' the first question time. He says that Labor has shown signs of manipulating the parliamentary calendar to its advantage and no explanation was given to the people of Queensland why parliament is not sitting the following week. There were only 27 normal sitting days in 2015, yet the LNP scheduled 30 normal sitting days in its first year despite not commencing the 54th Parliament until May. How can voters have any confidence in a Premier and a government that wants to hide? On Wednesday, 18 March we were sent advice that, if the parliament sits past 4 pm on Thursday—which we obviously have—its first sitting day, then we will sit again on Friday. How can Queenslanders feel confident in a government that had to be embarrassed into sitting an extra day? Let us take a look at Labor's

priorities for Queensland, with changing Labour Day back to May at the top of the list. How many jobs, jobs, jobs does changing Labour Day back create? Then it said that it would wind back some of the LNP's successful VLAD laws, thereby giving our dedicated police officers a real slap in the face.

But Labor's policy entitled Growth for Tourism Guarantee is light on detail and big on rhetoric. It appears to be an impulsive cut and paste of a number of industry wish list items interspersed with a few of the LNP initiatives—a hastily put together document without any underlying strategy, but why should this surprise us? Take a look at how many questions Labor asked me in hundreds of question times during the 54th Parliament. In 2012 I was asked two and in 2013 I was asked four but none of them related to my direct responsibilities as tourism minister and in 2014 it was zero. That is right: a whole year out from an election and not a single question. I used to sit there waiting and hoping in question time, but Labor just was not interested in tourism for the three years of the 54th Parliament and I do not believe that it is yet.

Labor is playing catch-up and it has a long way to go. Let us compare Labor's flimsy tourism guarantee to the LNP's whole-of-government approach, DestinationQ strategy, based on collaboration through partnerships with industry, and our strategy was working. Figures released by the ABS and reported in the media only last Friday show a jump of 20,000 new jobs in the tourism related sectors of accommodation and food services for 2014, growing from 58,000 to 78,000 under the LNP. This increase is a fitting finale to an exceptional year for our tourism industry. Overnight visitation increased to 20.1 million over the past two years, \$49.5 million in new money was invested in Tourism and Events Queensland over the past two financial years and \$82.5 million was spent on international and domestic marketing campaigns.

Our strong commercial partnerships will benefit the industry in coming years such as the Queensland government's three-year deal with Qantas and recently announced \$6 million agreement with Flight Centre. Our annual DestinationQ forums in a short space of time became recognised as Queensland's premier industry and government event. Attendance over the two days and industry reports from seven or more ministers were praised by bodies such as the Tourism and Transport Forum as leading practice for other states to follow. Under the LNP the Tourism Cabinet Committee was a key component of our strategy along with the annual DestinationQ Forum, the Aviation Attraction Investment Fund and the Tourism Investment Attraction Unit. What will happen to these successful and popular initiatives? We heard from the minister this morning that Labor will increase funding to the LNP's aviation investment fund. She obviously was not aware that the \$8 million fund still had plenty in it. Just throwing a few more bucks at it does not automatically bring new customers.

Labor promised to create a tourism cabinet subcommittee. Who will be on this? When will it be formed? We have not heard a peep from the minister on this, yet she had the perfect opportunity this morning to put on record her support for Queensland's tourism industry and show some genuine interest but instead she left five minutes of her speaking time on the clock. Labor promised \$40 million for events funding over four years; we promised \$60 million plus \$20 million for roadside signage and safety measures. But I do remind the new minister that there is more to tourism than events, important as they are, which is why the LNP merged the two into one superentity.

Initiatives like Destination Success, a landmark 20-year plan for tourism and shared long-term vision, were fashioned from discussions at DestinationQ forums. Close consultation with all 13 regional tourism organisations saw completion of their 20-year destination tourism plans. Our ecotourism plan made our national parks more accessible, and I commend former Minister Dickson for this, and we were seeing significant investment in new ecotourism ventures. I want to take a moment to thank everyone who worked so hard to make DestinationQ work: my personal staff; the departmental staff in Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games; Tourism and Events Queensland; QTIC; the RTOs and thousands of operators across Queensland. I sought and took their advice on many occasions these past three years. Over in the Sport portfolio, what of the fantastic Get in the Game initiative that was embraced by young and old across Queensland? The Get Started, Get Going and Get Playing initiatives, worth \$48 million over three years, really promoted healthy lifestyles for all our communities. What will happen to this? In fact, the Minister for Sport and Racing did not even mention anything about those aspects of his portfolio in his 20-minute speech.

Politics sank to a new low at this recent state election. I witnessed Greens volunteers on a number of booths in the Currumbin electorate telling voters their vote would not count unless all boxes were marked. They were told their vote would be invalid, which is completely untrue. Do Labor members condone this unscrupulous behaviour? How many are sitting in this House today because innocent voters were told blatant untruths on polling booths, thereby altering the outcome in some electorates?

How can Queenslanders have any confidence in a government that has reduced sitting days, hiding new ministers from scrutiny, showing that it has no plans for Queensland's economic future and instead playing politics by tinkering with a handful of get-even LNP reversals? It is a quarter of a year—94 days—since the election before the first sitting week. That is appalling.