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Leader of the Opposition**

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I am very pleased to be here at the invitation of the Queensland Media Club. Thank you for asking me to join you today.

December 2<sup>nd</sup> is a special day for Labor supporters. Twenty-five years ago Queenslanders elected the government of Wayne Goss after Labor's 32 years on the Opposition benches. It is also the anniversary of the election of Gough Whitlam's government in 1972.

As I said in Parliament last week, it is sad that we recently lost both of those Labor icons. It is especially tragic that Wayne died at just 63 when he had so much more to offer our community. I have always been inspired by Wayne Goss and his achievements and the way they were delivered. His methodical, logical, consensus style of government was a dramatic change from the autocratic, arrogant, self-indulgent, and inflammatory methods of previous premiers like Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

I believe that Queensland governments work best when they work with Queenslanders and do not work against them or attack and divide them. I am determined that a future Labor Government will be based on consensus and consultation and will take Queenslanders along with them, not attack them.

Wayne himself said about Labor's 1989 election victory:

“We basically said that we can as a community build a better society, one that is based on a commitment to honest standards and higher integrity in public life.”

I want to announce today some changes a future Labor Government would make to build on the legacy of accountability and integrity initiated by Wayne Goss.

But first I will outline what Labor in Queensland has been doing since the last state election.

### **The 2012 state election**

We are lucky in Australia to have our system of democratic government. In some countries the idea of an official opposition to a government is an alien concept. But our system has never been “winner takes all”. Some governments — usually those with huge majorities — make the mistake of thinking that way. But Australians and Queenslanders distrust people and parties who think they know it all.

On the flipside, voters never tolerate parties that “take their bat and ball and go home” after an election defeat. They expect government parties defeated at the polls to front up as the opposition and meet their responsibilities. They expect them to hold new governments to account and develop alternative policies to put to voters at the next election.

## **Labor's performance**

The history of the period since March 2012 is yet to be written. But I believe on any objective measure the Queensland Labor Party will be judged to have met or exceeded the expectations placed upon it as the opposition.

I have been proud to lead my party since 2012 despite having just seven — and now just nine MPs. In such overwhelming circumstances sitting back and waiting to fall back into office in a decade or so — or more — would or could be the easy thing to do. But all of us have been working hard since March 2012 to rebuild and reconnect and to meet our responsibilities.

My own strong work ethic — handed down through my parents from my grandparents who migrated from Poland and Germany — meant it has been a seven-days-a-week commitment. Our small team has shadowed 19 Cabinet Ministers and all their portfolios. We have travelled extensively so we can represent regional and rural communities across the state, especially where we no longer have any sitting Members.

We have met our parliamentary responsibilities.

We have filled our places on legislative committees and addressed every government Bill put before the House.

We have probed the government at Question Time and at Budget Estimates.

Our small Labor team has held to account a government almost 10 times its size.

I think voters recognise our efforts and many are again showing they are willing to place their trust in us. They have walked the journey with us and we have been there fighting for them every step of the way.

## **The original plan**

In preparing for this speech I unearthed my handwritten notes made soon after becoming Opposition Leader. In preparation for an interview with Paul Williams for his column in *The Courier-Mail*, I jotted down the plan of attack for the journey ahead.

I was pleasantly surprised when I came across the notes the other day just how closely I had followed that plan. It was very simple:

- Rebuild the party.
- Reconnect with voters.
- Restore trust.
- Get back to our core values — equality of opportunity; fairness; jobs.
- Keep the government accountable.
- Develop alternative policies.

Yes, it was simple but I believe it has also proved to be very effective and I have not deviated from that plan. I must admit to some trepidation at the thought of facing what were then 78 MPs on the government side when parliament first sat after the 2012 election. I insisted on all seven of us marching down George Street — as some of you may recall — and through the front door to take our rightful place as the opposition.

## **Hard work since 2012**

As I said earlier, a priority was to reconnect with all sections of the community. We went back to basics. Through regional visits; town hall meetings; Shadow Cabinet meetings; and in talking with communities and interest groups across the state we have been listening to people's ideas and concerns. The result has been a slow and steady rise in Labor support. But I never rely on any single poll or by-election result. So I make it clear that we enter the final few months of this term under no illusions. Labor cannot rely on some automatic or inevitable correction to regain lost seats. We must and will do what we have been doing since March 2012 — listening and working hard.

## **Voters turn off the LNP**

The one word that voters keep repeating to me when talking about the Newman LNP Government is “arrogant”. Unfortunately for the LNP the huge majority that was meant to guarantee it long-term government, has actually ended up feeding its arrogance and eroding voter confidence.

You can add to that .....

- the broken promises on a range of issues especially cost of living promises and cutting unemployment;
- the type of divisions the LNP has been creating by attacking those who disagree with it, and
- internal divisions and scandals that have seen five of its MPs defect or quit parliament in its first term.

Voters expected one type of government and got another. They were promised “humility, grace, and dignity” and were given arrogance, broken promises, and confrontation instead. Attacking nurses, doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, ambos, fires, and others who disagree with you is no way to run a government. At the weekend we saw in Victoria the end result of attacks on those in the frontline.

## **Economic and financial myths**

The only problem with the LNP's efforts to talk down Labor's record is it has never given Queenslanders the full facts. Take their claims about state debt. When Labor left office gross debt was \$62 billion. But the LNP has never admitted that almost half that debt or \$30.2 billion was held by government-owned businesses.

Like any other business, government-owned corporations borrow and repay their debt from revenue from their customers. In the case of port authorities they repay their borrowings from revenue they receive from customers like major export mining companies and others.

Tim Nicholls prefers to cite Queensland's gross debt. Treasurers in most other states and territories refer to general government net debt in their budget speeches — as did Treasurers in the Goss, Borbidge/Sheldon, Beattie and Bligh governments. Tim Nicholls conveniently avoids mentioning that Campbell Newman tripled debt as Lord Mayor from \$400 million in 2009 to \$1.2 billion in 2011.

## **Infrastructure creates jobs**

The LNP has never acknowledged that Labor's budget strategy in office — especially in the global financial crisis — was to invest in infrastructure to secure existing jobs or create new ones. Labor invested \$60 billion in infrastructure projects between 2008 and 2012 while also funding massive repair bills in the wake of a series of natural disasters. That's why Queensland came through the GFC in good shape compared with other economies. And, yes, some of that investment was funded by debt.

To listen to the Treasurer and others you would think former governments borrowed money and simply tore it up or threw it away.

They never acknowledge what it delivered:

- new and refurbished hospitals,
- new roads and the second Gateway Bridge,
- the Gold Coast light rail,
- new busways,
- new schools,
- the Moreton Bay rail link to Redcliffe,
- the Darra to Springfield rail line opening up the growing western corridor.

Labor invested because we did not want to see Queensland grind to a halt in the GFC. Debt funding was a part of these investments because future generations will be using new facilities such as hospitals that can have a life of 40 years or longer.

To say no government can ever borrow to add valuable infrastructure to the state's asset base is locking every generation into paying upfront for facilities and services that will also benefit future generations.

## **LNP takes credit**

The LNP has attacked Labor's strategy, but Ministers are not shy at cutting the ribbons on Labor projects. When smiling for the cameras at the opening of a busway, rail line or hospital, they never admit they would not have built them. They never admit the jobs those projects created or saved would have been lost. Their response to the GFC would have been to do nothing — to have Queensland curl up in a ball while thousands of jobs were lost.

## **Capital works freeze costs jobs**

The former Labor Government knew the value of investing in infrastructure. Unfortunately the LNP has started no big infrastructure projects, especially in regional Queensland. Its capital works freeze is costing Queenslanders jobs. It does nothing to stimulate business and job opportunities while aggravating rising living costs. Nobody can keep pace with the cost of living if they do not have a job.

The one major project the LNP touts is its new but unnecessary Executive Building it will rent in the Brisbane CBD. Taxpayers will spend \$1.2 billion renting it over the next 10-15 years; plus \$1.2 billion renting seven office blocks sold by Treasurer Nicholls at a \$237 million discount to justify the new building. Taxpayers will shell out \$2.6 billion but at the end of their rent agreement, we will have no tangible asset.

A stream of lease rental payments is as much a liability as borrowed debt. No wonder the LNP wants to divert attention from this deal and its capital works freeze by running a debt scare campaign.

## **No asset sales**

Labor learned its lesson on asset sales. We got the message loud and clear at the 2012 election. We respect the voice of the voters unlike the LNP that despite campaigning against asset sales in 2012 is burning through taxpayers' funds running untruthful ads as part of its "Strong Choices" campaign.

They would have you believe there is only one choice. They have even manipulated their sales pitch by talking about leases not sales. But everyone I meet tells me a 99-year lease is a sale. They agree with Tim Nicholls who said in 2010 that a long-term lease is just as good "as selling the farm". What the LNP is offering is a \$37 billion fire sale of assets supposedly to reduce debt.

Once again they are not telling the full story. The projected \$37 billion return includes proceeds from selling GOCs like our ports and power industry assets. These are the very bodies I mentioned before that carry and repay their own debt out of their income.

The LNP plan is to sell off GOCs and the \$2 billion-a-year revenue stream they return to consolidated revenue for spending on schools, hospitals, roads, and other facilities or services. The Treasurer wants to give away \$2 billion in annual revenue forever to save \$1.3 billion in the short term.

In return for losing \$37 billion in assets and \$2 billion a year in revenue, the LNP is offering an \$8.6 billion one-off pot of money for infrastructure projects. They have not explained what fills the hole in future infrastructure spending when that money is spent. They have also already overcommitted this fund and we can count around \$10 billion in promises various Ministers have made from this "Magic Pudding".

The massive sale of assets followed by higher power bills and job cuts need not happen. Shadow Treasurer Curtis Pitt will be presenting details of our approach at a later date. But for now let me assure Queenslanders that you can lower debt and interest costs in a more measured way.

There is more than one choice to be made when it comes to paying down debt and reducing interest bills.

Holding on to \$2 billion in annual revenue from GOCs is a logical starting point. To take a longer-term view, the loss of \$2 billion a year under the LNP's plans equates to a revenue loss of \$60 billion over 30 years.

We will be outlining a more measured approach. There is another choice other than the LNP's "fire sale" that will deliver only higher prices, fewer jobs, and more service cuts to fill a \$2 billion "black hole".

## **Confidence in Queensland**

The "fire sale" mentality on asset sales reflects the negative and scaremongering approach taken by the LNP since being elected.

Remember when the Premier and Treasurer were trying to outdo each other on who could talk down our state the most? On top of their 24,000 job cuts across the state it is no wonder our state economy has slumped and our state is drifting. And on that 24,000 figure, some of you may not know that it includes 4,800 positions cut from our hospital and health system including 1,800 nurse and midwife jobs.

These are not figures plucked from thin air. They are the government's own figures drawn from Right to Information searches lodged by the Queensland Nurses' Union. They are especially brutal in regional areas where nursing jobs and other frontline positions have been cut from local hospitals.

Recently released ABS National Accounts data details that Queensland's growth was 2.3% last financial year. That's nearly half the 4% growth inherited from the previous Labor Government. It was also below both the national average and Queensland's historical average.

Reports by the Commonwealth Bank, CommSec and Deloitte have all pointed to Newman Government cuts as a factor in slowing the economy.

### **No plans = no jobs**

Before the 2012 state election Campbell Newman said he had a plan to boost the state economy — without the need for asset sales. He promised he had a plan to have us heading towards a 4% jobless rate — without the need for asset sales.

Instead the LNP has taken unemployment in our state back up to levels not seen for more than a decade. Their first year in office in 2012-13 saw the worst result for jobs growth since 1990-91. Tim Nicholls even laughed off the 4% goal as “a stretch target” as if it were never to be taken seriously. Our jobless rate hit 7% seasonally adjusted in October after Labor left it at 5.5% in March 2012.

### **Labor versus LNP**

The figures show in black and white that growth was higher under Labor than under the LNP. Unemployment was lower under Labor than the LNP. Confidence was higher under Labor. Infrastructure spending and the spin-offs in terms of jobs and business activity were also higher.

When all those indicators are higher, business does better and invests and create jobs. But with the overdose of negativity dished out by the words and deeds of the LNP it's no wonder people slam their wallets shut, defer spending, and put renovations or home buying on hold.

Others who lose their jobs move away from a city, town or region and seek work elsewhere. Their spending is lost to that city, town, region, or indeed lost to the state. Unfortunately the LNP's slash-and-burn approach sent the message that Queensland was shutting its doors.

### **Labor delivers the bright spot**

The one bright spot is our new export LNG industry. This industry was started by former Labor Governments and will pay dividends for Queenslanders. By next financial year royalties from export LNG are expected to be almost \$500 million and the industry should make us the fastest growing state. By 2016-17 royalties are projected to be \$660 million.

The LNP is banking on this industry and these revenues to rescue it from its own lack of ideas and initiatives. Yet again LNP Ministers will be smiling for the cameras and giving Labor no credit.

### **Labor's positive policies**

I mentioned the 35 polices we have released so far, with more to come.

Jobs have been a key focus of Labor this term. We know secure jobs help not only to strengthen our economy, but strengthen the many unique regions and their individual communities across our state. My personal interest is in creating more jobs, and I know that business does the bulk of that.

Labor will work with business and unions to help deliver:

- secure jobs for those in work;
- training for those seeking jobs;
- support and training for those needing to change jobs;
- planning for future jobs as our economy and technologies change; and
- fair wages to underpin private consumption.

For example, our **Advance Queensland** policy will support research and innovation to stop the “brain drain” and leverage the talents and skills of our best and brightest minds.

**Jobs Queensland** will be an independent authority providing advice to government on skills demand and long-term work force planning.

We will reinstate **Skilling Queenslanders for Work** programs that Labor introduced but which the LNP cut. They scrapped it even though independent analysis showed it returned almost \$8.00 to the community for every \$1.00 it cost to run. It put people in work, took them off welfare, and that meant they were paying taxes, contributing to their communities, and saving and spending their own money.

**Building Queensland** is another important Labor policy. It will be an independent authority that remove politics from infrastructure delivery and ensure a level playing field for business. The biggest risk to a return to a Triple-A credit rating is poorly targeted, poorly planned, and poorly delivered infrastructure that does not lift productivity. Queenslanders don't want and can't afford political decision-making on infrastructure and a lack of transparency. They want integrity, transparency, and accountability.

### **Integrity and accountability**

On the subject of integrity and accountability Labor has already released several policies to put checks and balances back into government.

I mention Wayne Goss again in this context because the permanent demand by Queenslanders for integrity and accountability in government is one of the enduring legacies of his governments. They swept away decades of secrecy, favouritism, and corruption in favour of openness and accountability and a fair go for all as the Fitzgerald Report envisaged. It is unfortunate that the LNP has wound back those reforms in so many areas.

I have already announced we will reverse the LNP's decision to lift the disclosure level for political donations from \$1000 to what is now \$12,800. We will also make our disclosure laws retrospective to 21 November 2013 when the LNP laws came into effect.

Labor itself continues to abide by the \$1,000 threshold when lodging its returns. More recently — and despite the Premier saying the state is “cash poor” — the government has been spending tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars on thinly disguised political advertising. I have written to the independent Auditor-General about several of the ads running at the moment because I believe they breach the government's own guidelines. Labor has also introduced its own Private Member's Bill to give legislative backing to enforce the guidelines for this and future governments.

These are some of the elements of basic integrity and accountability I have outlined previously. Today I want to outline a few more that will ultimately form our larger integrity and accountability package for the 2015 election.

### **Speaker's role and powers**

I said at the start that we do not have a "winner takes all" system of government.

Unfortunately the LNP has viewed its big parliamentary majority as a licence to arrogantly push through its own extreme laws, especially to cut the rights and entitlements of wage earners. It has circumvented the parliamentary legislative committee process with controversial Bills. It sacked the all-party committee overseeing the former Crime and Misconduct Commission when it disagreed with it.

We need to treat our Parliament with respect. A starting point to ensure that respect is to restore the powers and responsibilities of the Speaker to run our State Parliament. We will ensure the Speaker's roles and responsibilities reflect the doctrine of the separation of powers. A future Labor Government will do that.

We will ensure the Speaker is not sidelined and can effectively operate the Parliament as a living and breathing component of our democratic system, not just act as referee on sitting days.

We will ensure the committee running the business of the House reflects the composition of the House with representation of major parties and cross-benchers — after all it is the people's House.

I preface my next remark by saying it is no reflection on the current Speaker. But the existing practice is certainly questionable where we see the Speaker appearing at Budget Estimates hearings only to have questions from MPs answered by the Deputy Premier Jeff Seeney.

### **Choice of Directors-General**

I turn now to the executive arm of government.

Labor in office will ensure there is a transparent, merit-based process for selecting and appointing heads of government departments. Queenslanders need to know those at the top of government will do the right thing and have no conflict of interest when it comes to making decisions.

Ministers and MPs already lodge publicly available lists of their pecuniary interests. A Labor Government will extend that requirement to all Directors-General as well.

### **Crime and Corruption Commission**

I have already announced we will ensure all appointments of the Chair and the CEO of the state's anti-corruption watchdog the Crime and Corruption Commission have bipartisan support. I want to reinstate the CCC's corruption prevention functions; its ability to handle anonymous complaints; as well as return its independence when it comes to making decisions on what it will research.

Those decisions should not be in the hands of the Attorney-General which is where the LNP has placed them — especially the current Attorney-General. Today I announce a further initiative Labor will take when returned to office to enhance the CCC.



## **Appointment of CCC Chair**

We will revise the terms of engagement of the chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission to make their salary and remuneration package similar to that of a Supreme Court Judge. This will make the position more attractive to experienced judicial officers or very senior legal practitioners from inside or outside our state.

It will ensure that the Chair of the CCC is of the highest calibre, completely independent, has extensive criminal law experience, and will have the confidence of all Queenslanders to fulfil what is one of the state's most important positions. It will also bring the position more in line with that of the ICAC Commissioner in New South Wales.

## **Protocol for judicial appointments**

A Labor Government will also work with stakeholders to develop a protocol for the appointment of judicial officers. Those stakeholders will include the judiciary, Bar Association of Queensland, the Queensland Law Society, and others.

These types of integrity and accountability reforms are no longer of interest only to academics and students of public administration. Since the Fitzgerald Inquiry laid bare the workings of former governments, everyday Queenslanders have demanded higher standards. Wayne Goss raised the bar and I will raise it higher.

## **Queenslanders want integrity**

I know from personal experience that our fight against the Newman Government's efforts to wind back Fitzgerald reforms strike a real chord with Queenslanders. People have stopped me in supermarkets, fruit shops, airport car parks and other places to press on me their complaints about the LNP's disregard for the Fitzgerald reforms.

Integrity is not a boutique issue. It is a mainstream concern especially for Queenslanders because they know all too well where a lack of integrity and accountability leads. Labor recognises that too, even if the LNP doesn't.

Evidence of that is the fact that right now an LNP Assistant Minister paid by taxpayers can be actively working for his own personal financial gain on a project needing the approval of his own colleagues in his own government. This scandalous low point in standards of government brings new meaning to the expression "the moonlight state".

Under any government I lead no Minister or Assistant Minister will be moonlighting on private projects that stand to make them millions of dollars if approved. Surely any Premier with even the most basic standards of integrity can see it's just not on.

## **Conclusion**

With the end of parliamentary sittings for 2014 there is speculation an election will be called in the New Year. The Premier knows what dates he has in mind and I don't think he will tell me even if I ask.

The choice of government for voters will be the LNP or Labor. We have a record of achievement beyond our numbers. We have policy runs on the board with more to come.

We have now filled all but five of the state's 89 seats with high-calibre candidates — police officers, small business operators, paramedics, teachers, and others from a variety of backgrounds.

They are overwhelmingly fresh faces with fresh ideas plus a handful of others experienced in the ways of the parliament and in the way government works.

It is a big ask to win office from just nine out of 89 seats. But I can assure you and all Queenslanders — and the LNP — that Labor will be fighting the coming campaign to win, just as we always do.

And remember, this is Queensland and anything can happen.