




Speech By
Hon. Mark Bailey

MEMBER FOR YEERONGPILLY

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MOTION OF CONFIDENCE

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Yeerongpilly—ALP) (Minister for Main Roads, Road Safety and Ports and Minister for Energy and Water Supply) (4.55 pm): May I commence by acknowledging that we gather on the lands of Aboriginal people. I would like to pay my respects to the elders past and present and to their culture of 60,000 years. I would also like to congratulate you on your appointment, Madam Deputy Speaker, and congratulate the Speaker, the member for Nicklin, and all deputy speakers. I extend my congratulations to every member of this House on their election to the Legislative Assembly. I would also like to thank the good people of Yeerongpilly for placing their faith and trust in me to represent them for the next three years. It is an honour that I have been very grateful to receive. Having previously served three terms with the Brisbane City Council, for me the honour is no less for being here. I thank them for their faith, and I will work hard for them every day.

I wholeheartedly support the motion of confidence in this government. On 31 January Queenslanders voted the Newman government out of office. It was a first-term government that lost 36 seats in less than three years. What we saw was the unprecedented destruction of a government with the largest political majority in Australian history, and it came about in less than three years for very definitive reasons. The Newman government betrayed the trust of the people of Queensland. A lot has been made about the inexperience of this government and this ministry, so I thought I would do a little bit of research to compare the Newman government's incoming ministry three years ago to the incoming ministry under the Palaszczuk Labor government. What I discovered is that, going into the Newman government three years ago, there were 130 days of cabinet experience. When you look at this Palaszczuk Labor government, there is in fact 25 times the level of experience around the cabinet table compared to three years ago under the Newman government—and doesn't it show! The Palaszczuk cabinet has 3,279 days of cabinet experience versus 130. There is a lot of experience—

Opposition members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I remind members of the protocol around showing courtesy during a member's maiden speech.

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. That convention relies on the member not being unduly provocative in their maiden speech. We will hold our interruptions, recognising that it is the member's maiden speech; however, if there is a continuation of undue provocation, then we will not uphold the convention forthwith.

Mr BAILEY: That is fine. I do not have a problem with that. Madam Deputy Speaker, instead of keeping their election promises and staying in touch with ordinary Queenslanders, what did we see under the previous government? We saw double-digit electricity price rises three years in a row. We saw the mass sacking of 24,000 public servants across this state after they were assured that they would be safe leading into the 2012 election. We saw schools closed by a shoddy process. We saw front-line services cut, despite very clear assurances to people before the 2012 election. We saw the intake of teachers cut drastically from about 650 down to 140.

We saw front-line nurses cut right across our hospital system. We saw unemployment surging. The only major infrastructure project anywhere in the state—this was something raised with me by the regional mayors in Hughenden and by other regional leaders during my three regional trips so far—was the 43-storey ‘tower of power’ next to Parliament House, commissioned by the then government in undue haste—at a time, I might add, when they were telling everybody that there was not enough money to pay for basic services in this state. The people of Queensland understood that.

The previous government struck at the heart of our most vulnerable Queenslanders. For instance, in the last budget it tried to take concessions off seniors and pensioners to help with their water and electricity bills. When I saw that, I could not believe my eyes. It took them a day to back down because there was an outcry right across this state.

Householders who made the switch to solar were ridiculed as being latte sippers and champagne drinkers. The public health system was undermined by a protracted and unnecessary dispute with doctors and staff. The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct—

Mr STEVENS: I rise to a point of order. I hate to interrupt in terms of the conventions that apply to a maiden speech—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr STEVENS: The point of order is—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Please resume your seat.

Mr STEVENS: I haven’t explained my point of order. My point of order is that there is a continuation of undue provocation in this inaugural speech. That means that the convention goes out the door.

Mr BAILEY: That is fine. Go for it.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. If you wish to interject and ignore the courtesy, that is your choice.

Mr BAILEY: Be my guest. The Parliamentary Crime and Misconduct Committee was sacked and the bipartisan process which had been in place for a quarter of a century, under successive Labor and conservative governments since the Fitzgerald inquiry, was shamefully scrapped. It was a return to the bad old days of the moonlight state. Environmental protection laws were systematically wound back at a time when climate change threatens our economic future and demands real leadership in response.

Mr Stevens: What about Gordon Nuttall?

Mr BAILEY: We are getting interjections from 10 years ago! I have to remind the member for Mermaid Beach that the year is 2015.

The 23-year uranium mining ban was scrapped, despite clear public assurances to the people of Queensland that there were no plans to take it away. It took them six months to break their election promise—six months! There has not been a mandate in this state to mine uranium, by any major party taking it to the people of Queensland, since 1986. If those opposite are so passionate about uranium, why do they not take it to the people of Queensland as part of their platform? They do not have the courage.

Under the previous government public transport services were cut and debt increased by \$14 billion. Those opposite can go on about debt all they like, but debt increased significantly under the previous government. We saw accountability and transparency cast aside, with secret political donations of up to \$12,800 sanctioned and made legal. The lessons of the Fitzgerald inquiry were deliberately ignored. Workers’ rights were systematically undermined and the representatives of working people, the union movement, were under constant attack. The funding of the community sector—this is one of the most shameful examples—which represents our most vulnerable Queenslanders, not only lost large amounts of funding but also were gagged from speaking in the media on behalf of vulnerable people across this state.

We also saw renewable energy programs cut. We saw jobs and investment opportunities lost while other states like South Australia and Victoria took advantage of the global transition to cleaner energy sources. We saw crossbenchers, Independents and minor parties—given no respect throughout the three years of the previous parliament—treated with contempt. That I cannot support.

Tens of millions of taxpayers’ dollars were spent on highly political propaganda campaigns promoting the so-called Strong Choices campaign. We still see the same old lines from the Strong Choices campaign being trotted out. It was a deliberately deceptive campaign. The then government should have been spending those millions of dollars on services—on operations—and on helping people, not telling people their political message.

The former LNP government's litany of broken promises tells a story that Queenslanders know all too well. The truth is that at the last election the LNP thought they had two or three terms in the bag and they behaved accordingly. They had no intention of keeping the trust of Queenslanders. It is a sorry record. Those opposite let Queenslanders down.

The opposition leader was there every step of the way. He was a senior member of the previous government.

Honourable members interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for Yeerongpilly has the call. Could other members please cease the chat across the chamber.

Mr BAILEY: The current opposition leader was there every day of the last term of government—supporting every decision, being a part of every process and every debate—and was very much a part of that government. The question in terms of this confidence motion has to be: has he learned the lessons of losing majority government, of losing 36 seats over the term of the last government? The answer is that clearly he has not. There have been no apologies. After the 2012 election the current Premier, the member for Inala, made it very clear that Labor had got some significant things wrong, and she apologised on behalf of the Labor movement. She took responsibility for those actions. Yet over the past six weeks I have seen none of that from the opposition—in fact, quite the contrary. There have been no apologies—no mea culpas—from any member of the opposition. The closest the opposition leader came was in the *Cairns Post* on 4 March, when he said, 'We're bad at marketing.' The Leader of the Opposition sees the loss of 36 seats as a case of poor marketing. It is indeed sad. The opposition leader simply does not understand why they lost.

I listened to the contribution to the debate made by the member for Clayfield. He said that the election result was a protest vote gone wrong. I am sorry, but the vote in this election was very clear. There has been some debate about the numbers, so I would like to remind the chamber of a few things. The LNP had a lower primary vote in 2015 than when it lost in 2009. Those opposite can go on about the primary vote all they like, but their primary vote at this election was actually not only less than it was three years ago; it was less than it was six years ago. If those opposite cannot accept responsibility for the colossal loss, they are not fit to govern this state.

The LNP's answer to this catastrophe is to elect a 'new' leader who has already been to the people three times and been rejected. That does not seem to me to be an opposition that is either accepting responsibility for its behaviour in government or placing faith in a new generation of leaders. I note the contribution of the member for Everton, who received quite a substantial vote in the leadership contest. It is remarkable that the LNP has gone back to a leader who has been rejected by Queenslanders three times.

There are no signs or stirrings from any opposition members that they take responsibility in any shape or form. In fact, some of those issues affected my patch. The closure of Nyanda State High School in Salisbury was an absolute disgrace. Unfortunately, that cannot be unravelled; it has already been sold by the previous government. That closure let down communities right across the south side. It was a good school—a school that had won statewide environmental awards. It was a great community destroyed by the previous government.

If you do not listen you do not learn—that is how I see it—and those opposite are still not listening to this day. Queenslanders broke with tradition in that most electorates give a first-term government the benefit of the doubt, but that was not the case on this occasion because those opposite did not earn it.

I want to note the contribution of the nine MPs in the previous parliament—that is, it started with seven but became nine—led by the member for Inala. There has probably never been an opposition with a greater task than the Labor opposition in the last parliament. When few people gave Labor's small team any hope of achieving government, those nine MPs stood up for the vulnerable and stood up for good policy and presented—and I reiterate this very clearly to the chamber—more than 50 detailed policies to the people of Queensland at the last election. Those opposite can bang on about no plans all they like, but we put 50-plus policies to the people of Queensland—policies in consultation with stakeholders—that will deal with a whole range of issues that were comprehensive. Those nine MPs stood up for the vulnerable and at the last election this side of politics received 50.9 per cent of the two-party preferred vote. That is a majority. The numbers speak loudly. I pay tribute to those nine MPs who fought so courageously against overwhelming odds during the last parliament and now are mostly senior ministers—the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer and the ministers for police, state development, agriculture and the Attorney-General. I also pay tribute to the former members for Mackay and Woodridge who were part of that team who have since retired. They were members who contributed very much to this chamber.

Government members: Hear, hear!

Mr BAILEY: In the same vein the member for Nicklin also stood up for justice and a fair go, not just in the last term but over 17 years in office, and I was very proud to see the member for Nicklin become the Speaker of this parliament. For him to be the first truly independent Speaker in 100 years, this is a proud day for the parliament.

The decision to support the Palaszczuk Labor government is consistent with the principles that we put to the people. We are worthy of the confidence of this House as the largest party with 44 seats in conjunction with the member for Nicklin. We said to the people that we would not sell off our public assets and the people agreed with us, and now to the point where the opposition supports that policy. It supports that policy of not selling public assets. That is now apparently a bipartisan position—at least for now! Labor will restore accountability and transparency to the parliament in terms of a bipartisan Parliamentary Crime and Corruption Committee being restored with an opposition member to chair that committee as an appointment made by joint agreement of the House and, of course, with the Independent Speaker.

Labor has a plan to reduce government debt without selling off our public assets. We will merge the three power network entities—Ergon, Energex and Powerlink—into a single network entity and we will merge the two power generators in CS Energy and Stanwell, as we said in our policy at the last election, in close consultation with the ACCC to ensure competition is protected. There are no surprises there. The Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to working towards a clean energy future sustainably via renewable energy. While South Australia is producing a third of its power today via renewable energy, Queensland has been left behind over the past three years due to the hostility of the previous government towards renewable energy in a sector where the whole world is moving towards it. You are either part of it or you are part of the problem. This government is part of the solution.

We are also committed to job creation to get investment and confidence flowing back into the Queensland economy. The Premier has already held a number of business forums. On my first morning as a minister I called a whole range of stakeholders to introduce myself as the new minister, and it was a very interesting experience. A range of stakeholders said to me, ‘You are the first minister to call me in three years.’

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BAILEY: They said, ‘You are the first minister to call me in three years.’

An opposition member interjected.

Mr BAILEY: No, corporate types; the private business sector in fact. I also spoke to a business leader at a breakfast function—he was a very distinguished gentleman—who said to me that in his corporate career he had never been treated like he was treated by the previous Premier. That was a government that was arrogant and out of touch. We are committed to doing things like establishing the Queensland Productivity Commission to get independent economic advice about how best to invest public money to create jobs. We will be including in the agenda a comprehensive review into renewable energy opportunities for our state to grow jobs, to respond to climate change and to attract investment. As part of that review we will establish a fair price for solar, we will examine off-grid opportunities for local governments to compete for energy solutions and commence Queensland’s first renewable energy auction to get projects up and running. Past experience has shown that the LNP is not serious about climate change or the environment, and the people of Queensland are very clear about this: they will punish any party that does not treat the environment seriously. If ever there was a lesson out of this election for all parties, then that must be it. The people of Queensland expect protection of the environment and action on climate change to be a core part of any party’s platform.

The Palaszczuk Labor government is a modern government with contemporary values and real diversity in our ranks. I am delighted to be in a cabinet with eight members out of the 14 being women—a first for our nation. I am also delighted to serve with nearly 40 per cent of our government as women. I am also proud to share this chamber with the members for Algester and Cook—Labor’s first two Indigenous MPs and, in the case of the member for Algester, the first Indigenous cabinet minister in Queensland’s history. I also find it a great privilege to be here with the member for Cairns, who knows the importance of public policy in all areas but especially in the area of disability. He also brings a lot of local government experience to this chamber. We have four previous local councillors in our ranks and two previous federal members of parliament, so this government offers experience at all three levels of government and is a government that understands how to run this state.

I endorse the motion and say in closing that I have known the Premier and the member for Inala for 25 years. I worked for her when she was the minister for transport and I can reliably tell the House that behind the scenes the Premier is the same person as we see in the spotlight. She is gracious, she is inclusive, she is compassionate and she is sharp as a tack. She is deserving of the confidence of this House. She is setting a high standard for this House in every way and I am absolutely proud, as I know everyone on this side is, to support her as Premier and to support her government.