

**QUEENSLAND PREMIER
ANNASTACIA PALASZCZUK MP
KEYNOTE ADDRESS
ALP STATE CONFERENCE
TOWNSVILLE 29TH JULY 2017**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Thank-you Simon
- Party President John Battams
- Secretary Evan Moorhead and Assistant Secretary Jon Persley
- Members of my Cabinet, Members of Caucus, and Candidates
- Leader of the Federal Opposition Bill Shorten, Senators and Federal Members of Parliament
- Life members of the great Australian Labor Party
- Members of our union movement
- Delegates one and all

Friends, welcome to Townsville.

Holding the Labor State Conference here in the largest city in northern Australia shows yet again the commitment of my Government - and our Party's - to the north and to regional Queensland.

I am proud to stand before you here as a Labor Premier of a Labor Government.

A Government that is working together with Queenslanders – not against them.

We promised and we've delivered a better way, a much fairer way.

Queenslanders can be confident they have a Labor Government that stands up for them and their hard won rights.

We never have and never will shy away from a challenge.

As we know, Queenslanders don't mind a fight – especially when we're the underdog.

One down in the first game of Origin, we came back to win another historic series at Lang Park.

And at the same venue, Jeff Horn confounded the pundits to become Queensland's newest world champion.

Friends, like Jeff Horn, we will go into our coming election fight as underdogs.

We will face a coalition between the LNP and One Nation – make no mistake, the LNP will enter into a coalition with One Nation if given the slightest chance.

It doesn't matter what the LNP says or does, their track record is clear – they say one thing before the election, and do something completely different after it.

Queenslanders will recognise the LNP's desperation – they know their deception.

In stark contrast, we are setting the agenda. We are setting the pace. We keep our commitments. We deliver on our promises.

We are fighting for things that are important to Queenslanders every single day – like their rights as workers.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Friends, our party was born of the workers and for the workers.

Since our last conference, my Government has worked hard to make workplaces safe, secure and fair for workers across this state.

We passed a new Industrial Relations Act, to restore fairness and balance to workplaces, through genuine consultation and collective bargaining.

We have acted to clean up the labour hire sector.

For too long dodgy operators have exploited vulnerable workers.

Underpayment and unauthorised deductions, overcrowded and substandard accommodation, phoenix operators left workers stranded.

Frankly they're a disgrace.

Labour hire companies will have to show they deserve to be licensed – and anyone using a labour hire company will have to ensure that company is licensed.

We have implemented the National Injury Insurance Scheme to provide lifetime care, treatment and support to workers who suffer catastrophic workplace injuries.

We have introduced legislation to ensure coal miners concerned about Black Lung have access to appropriate medical examinations through the Workers Compensation Scheme.

We've also introduced laws to better protect electrical workers. The electrical safety regulator can get necessary information to assess the competency of electrical work licence applicants.

Every family deserves the comfort of knowing that when a loved one goes to work each day they will come home safely.

That is why we will create a new offence of "*negligence causing death*" to address workplace manslaughter.

HONOURING QUEENSLANDERS' TRUST

Friends, it's almost exactly two and a half years since Queenslanders put their trust in Labor to provide strong, stable, caring government.

We will always honour that trust.

From day one, my instructions to Cabinet were clear and very simple: We are here to serve the people – to hear their concerns and deliver for them.

That's what drives you, as delegates. It motivates our Branch members and inspires all our MPs.

NORTH QUEENSLAND NEEDS RECOGNITION

Can I say again, how I am still humbled by the level of support the people of the North placed in my Government at the last election.

We are working hard every day to repay that faith.

My Government will never forget that one in five Queenslanders is a north Queenslander, and it is vital that this region is heard and respected.

Coralee O'Rourke as a Minister, and MPs Scott Stewart and Aaron Harper have done just that.

They never take a backward step in their advocacy of the north.

We must never ignore the needs of the north and our regions.

In stark contrast, when I called on Turnbull to convene a COAG meeting to discuss northern Australia, the place he chose as the venue was – wait for it - Hobart!

Let me assure you, every one of my Cabinet team is well aware of what north Queenslanders want from my Government.

This is a region of enormous opportunities.

My Government is solidly backing new initiatives to reinvigorate that spirit of confidence, hope and optimism in Townsville and the North.

It's hard to think of a better embodiment of those qualities than the beloved North Queensland Cowboys!

TOWNSVILLE STADIUM

One of my proudest achievements for Townsville is our commitment to get this city's centrepiece stadium built.

It will provide a new home for the Cowboys, and draw visitors and businesses to a new sporting, cultural and entertainment precinct on the southern edge of the CBD.

I am pleased to say that I'll be back here again in less than three weeks to turn the sod on the start of construction for this amazing stadium.

We backed the Stadium in Opposition and honoured our promise as soon as we were in Government.

Again In stark contrast, the Prime Minister had to be strong-armed into funding the Stadium.

It also represents an enormous opportunity for jobs in the north – Builder Watpac has committed that Townsville locals will put in 80% of time spent building the stadium.

They're also working to ensure 80% of the value of the project will be spent on local subcontractors and suppliers.

My Government is determined to ensure that workers and businesses in Queensland regions benefit directly from regional projects.

'BUY & HIRE QLD' PROCUREMENT POLICY

Today I can announce a major shift in my Government's procurement policy – one which will back Queensland jobs above all others.

In an Australian first, Queensland will take the lead.

Taxpayers dollars are precious – we must ensure we spend them as wisely as possible, to extract the maximum benefit for Queenslanders.

That means recognising that value for money is more than choosing the cheapest price.

Our new procurement strategy is unashamedly a Buy Queensland one.

No longer will we be constrained by free trade agreements that have seen jobs go off-shore or interstate.

We are going to go our own way.

Queensland will show the way.

That means reconsidering the Australia-New Zealand Government Procurement Agreement.

This trade document defines “local” as Australia or New Zealand. That’s not a level playing field – and it’s not good for Queensland.

We are not talking about wholesale protectionism – we are talking about putting Queensland first.

If the Australia-New Zealand Government procuring Agreement gets in the way of that, we will go it alone.

From September the 1st we will insist on a fair-go and fair deal for Queenslanders, their jobs and Queensland businesses.

We plan to define a local supplier as a business that maintains a workforce within a 125 km radius of where the goods or workers are needed.

This policy will apply to all agencies and government owned corporations.

The Queensland Government spends \$14 billion a year on buying supplies and services. We spend a further \$4 billion to build and maintain infrastructure.

This money comes from Queensland taxpayers – it is only right we spend it in a way that benefits Queensland businesses and workers as much as possible.

There will be a test applied to all significant procurements with a local weighting of up to 30%.

Wherever possible, one regional and one Queensland supplier will be invited to quote or tender for every procurement opportunity offered.

Preference must be given to local subbies and manufacturers on significant infrastructure projects of \$100 million or more.

These big projects will also be required to commit up to 15% of funding on apprenticeships, up from 10% today.

Those businesses tendering for Government procurement contracts must have a permanent workforce.

They must offer fair wages, conditions and super, and of course, good workplace health and safety records.

Our tough new approach for local procurement will be backed up and enforced by a special compliance and coordination unit.

Reinvesting in Queensland through this procurement policy will ensure a fair go for workers and businesses across this state.

We are also investing in our people.

FRONTLINE SERVICES

Friends, we've restored frontline services in the health sector.

We have employed:

- over 3,170 new nurses;
- nearly 1200 doctors;
- and over 1200 allied health professionals since we came to office.

In health, we are continuing our record investment in infrastructure – upgrading and building new facilities -from the Gold Coast in the south, to the Darling Downs and Western Queensland, and right up to North Queensland, including the paediatric ward here in Townsville, to the Cape and Torres Strait.

For our schools, there are 3,095 extra teachers and teacher aides in our schools. There are:

- 330 more police;
- 250 ambulance officers; and
- 205 fire and emergency services officers.

In schools, we are investing \$500 million over five years to help deliver world class education facilities where they are needed most as part of our *Building Future Schools Fund*.

We build because it is in our nature.

Every Labor Government leaves a legacy.

Every LNP Government leaves a wreck.

POWERING NORTH QUEENSLAND PLAN

In our regions, I know many Queenslanders are doing it tough.

My entire government is acutely aware of the cost of living pressures faced by so many families across the state - especially vulnerable and disadvantaged families.

That's why we have invested \$386 million in our *Powering North Queensland Plan*, which will support 5,000 jobs.

This Plan will use the dividends of our state-owned generators to build transmission lines linking renewable energy projects across the state's north to major markets, increasing generation capacity and supporting 4,600 jobs.

We're investing \$100 million in an upgrade of the Burdekin Falls Dam, the state's biggest, and another \$100 million in advancing a hydro-electric power station there that could power 30,000 homes.

Our state-wide *Powering Queensland Plan* has been hailed by experts, regulators and the market as a textbook case of how to put downward pressure on future wholesale power prices.

We can do this because we own the assets. That lets us re-invest dividends to put the lid on price rises, and build new energy infrastructure.

Through our commitment to publicly-owned power assets, we are looking to establish a 'Clean Co' Government Owned Corporation to operate a growing fleet of renewable generators.

We will also encourage the existing government-owned generators to diversify into renewable generation.

The National Electricity Market is broken – but what is propping it up is Queensland.

Friends, look at the pocket NEM app on your phone, which most of the time shows Queensland has the lowest wholesale energy prices in the country.

The proof is plain to see – under my Government’s *Powering Queensland* Plan, wholesale futures contracts have dropped 16% and are staying down.

None of this would have been possible under the LNP, because they wanted to sell assets that belong to all Queenslanders.

Despite the mess of the National Electricity Market, electricity price increases have been held at an average 1.9% a year under my Government.

Compare that to increases of up to 19% in other states and territories who have sold their power assets.

And compare that record against power price increases of 43% during the LNP’s time in office.

Under the LNP’s formula for power bills would have been more than \$600 higher today.

In contrast, my Government has extended the \$341 electricity rebate to thousands more health care card holders to help with the cost of living.

WATER SECURITY FOR TOWNSVILLE

We're also addressing an issue that's gone on for too long in Townsville – water supply.

Our \$225 million commitment will focus on a duplication of the pipeline from the Haughton Pump Station to the Ross River Dam.

These projects in the vital utilities of water and power will help secure north Queensland's economic future.

And they will do it because of the commitment of a Queensland Labor Government, and in spite of the contemptuous neglect shown by the Federal Government.

QUEENSLAND – TURNBULL’S BLIND SPOT

I spoke of fighting earlier – Malcolm Turnbull is too busy fighting off Tony Abbott and his conservative mates to focus on Queensland.

In two years, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility has not lent a single cent.

The Prime Minister, a self-professed fan of public transport won't back Cross River Rail – even though Infrastructure Australia thinks the Brisbane CBD is south of the river near a suburb called “Hill Gate.”

And in response to our call for Canberra to match our \$110 million Category D funding for Cyclone Debbie, we've been offered less than \$30 million – a kick in the guts for communities from Bowen to Beaudesert.

We have a Prime Minister happy to tour cyclone-devastated communities, but unwilling to fix them up.

QLD'S JOBS AND INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET

Since the 2015 election, more than 77,300 jobs have been created in Queensland.

Our June budget was unashamedly about growth.

It was about jobs, and the dignity of work - about diversifying and strengthening our economy.

It will support another 40,000 jobs in the next 12 months.

LABOR INVESTS IN PEOPLE

Friends, in tough times we step up. We always invest in people.

Over the last year, I have again travelled the length and breadth of Queensland.

I have heard how so many – especially in our regions - are doing it tough. Our commitment to address that hardship is ferocious.

BACK TO WORK

We have injected \$77.5 million of new funding for our very successful Back to Work program that has already supported over 6,000 job seekers in regional Queensland.

Any Queenslander – out of work for more than twelve months – can offer their prospective employer not just their skills and experience, but a government payment of up to \$15,000 if they give them a job.

I say again to Queensland employers – let us help you to get Queenslanders Back to Work.

In recognition of our rapidly evolving workforce requirements, we have also committed \$10 million to help job seekers acquire new skills to get new jobs.

They will get vouchers for free TAFE training for two years – a modest but important step to help Queenslanders train for a new job.

HOUSING STRATEGY

Friends, we are reminded every day just how unaffordable housing is for so many people – especially those seeking to buy their first home.

To assist in building a better housing future for Queenslanders the very popular \$20,000 First Home Owners Grant has been extended for six months.

I am very proud of our stand-out new housing strategy.

It's a sweeping, innovative plan to increase the supply of social housing, new affordable housing and private dwellings.

By encouraging and working with the private and community sectors, in partnership, we can leverage investment to build more dwellings, more homes for more Queenslanders.

\$1.6 billion will be spent directly on delivering 4,522 new social houses, 1,034 new affordable houses.

That commitment to over 5,500 new social and affordable homes represents close to a 10-fold increase on the 570 social housing homes the Government built over the last 2 years.

In doing so, we will support another 4,500 full-time jobs over the ten-year action plan.

MORE YOUTH FOYERS

Another \$20 million will go to the internationally acclaimed Youth Foyer program, and two new foyers will be established in Townsville and on the Gold Coast.

Today 12-24 year olds make up 23% of Queensland's homeless population.

Youth Foyers offer more than just emergency short-term accommodation.

They offer young people safety and support while engaging them in training and education.

We want to be able to provide young adults a helping hand to regain their dignity and get back on their feet and into a job.

YOUTH CRIME

Homelessness isn't the only issue affecting young people in Townsville.

I am well aware of the impact that property and vehicle crimes in particular, by youths and young adults in Townsville, are having on many people in this city.

That's why 20 additional Rapid Action Patrol officers are being deployed to Townsville to tackle crime.

Together with our Stronger Communities Action Group and Community Youth Response, we are not just tackling crime, we're addressing the issues behind it, to reduce re-offending and make this community a safer place to live.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

As a community, we need to work together to address the issue of family and domestic violence.

One of the first things I did as Premier was to take delivery of the landmark Not Now, Not Ever report.

My Government has accepted all 140 recommendations contained in the Report, designed to help end domestic and family violence.

To date, of the 121 recommendations directed to Government, 67 have now been completed, with the remaining 49 recommendations underway.

We have increased funding to deliver important changes, and my Government has committed more than \$323 million over five years to achieve the objectives that report.

We are delivering on our promise to create a 10-year strategy for the prevention of domestic and family violence.

Long-term commitment is essential, and my Government is making that long-term commitment.

VALE GERRY JONES, PHIL GRAY, CON SCIACCA

Delegates, since we last met, our movement has lost some of our greatest true believers - Gerry Jones, Phil Gray and Con Sciacca.

Gerry Jones was a gifted athlete, boxer and building contractor who joined the party in 1956.

He was State Organiser and State Secretary.

Gerry helped organise and lead protests in Brisbane against the apartheid-era Springbok rugby union team.

In 1973, he won the state seat of Everton serving only one term, then served as a Senator from 1980 to 1996.

In April – the same month we lost Gerry - we also lost a proud Gold Coaster and former Gaven MP Phil Gray, who died just a day short of his 70th birthday.

Phil, was a people's person – a passionate advocate for numerous community groups in the Nerang and Helensvale communities.

A former teacher, Phil was a life member of the Queensland Public Sector Union and he was honoured for his outstanding service to community organisations.

Earlier this month, a Lion of the Labor movement, and a friend to so many of us here, Con Sciacca passed away in Brisbane.

Con was the Federal Member for Bowman and served as Minister in the Hawke and Keating Governments.

Con was a true gentleman. He as one of those rare politicians who crossed the political divide, and was respected and admired by people of all political persuasions.

Con was a larger than life Queenslander, and he was a mentor.

As Minister for Veterans Affairs on the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two, Con asked Australians to remember. Con, we will never forget.

I pass on all our sympathies to the families of Gerry, Phil and Con – we share your lose and accept our condolences.

VETERANS AFFAIRS' PORTFOLIO

While I am on the subject of Veterans Affairs – and I know it is an issue close to the hearts of many people in Townsville – I know there's been some talk about Queensland having a standalone Veterans Affairs portfolio.

Queensland already has a Minister with responsibility for Veterans Affairs' – it's me.

My Director-General deals with Veterans Affairs matters for this government.

You cannot get more senior representation than that.

I am proud that it was my Government that expanded income eligibility for the Bond Loan and Rental Grants programs to include Veterans' Affairs disability payments.

I can assure Queenslanders that I will always listen to our men and women who have served about the issues affecting them, and what more my government can do to assist.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTS AND DELIVERS

Friends, I promised Queenslanders I would lead a team that would rebuild our economy, savaged after three years of cuts.

We have delivered - Queensland is a great place to live and work, and a great place to raise a family.

And Queensland is at its best when we are working together.

Where this Government, and this party is fundamentally different to the LNP, is how we treat people.

We listen to them, we consult with them and we deliver on our promises.

You heard from former Queensland Health employee Simon Mitchell – a registered nurse with 30 years' service delivering care to fellow Queenslanders.

To the LNP, Simon was a just number – not a nurse.

He was one of more than 14,000 government workers that the LNP and Tim Nicholls arrogantly cut.

They didn't care what impact these cuts had on Queenslanders, because they seemly don't care.

But these are real people, with real families.

LABOR GOVERNS WITH CERTAINTY

Friends, before we gather again my Government will face an election.

Queenslanders can have faith that the Government I lead is a Government of certainty.

We have a detailed, costed and effective strategy for the future of our state and its people.

Well prepared plans that outline a future for economic growth, new jobs and new investment.

Queenslanders are front and centre in all our decision making.

Delegates, the next election will test all of us here.

Last time, we climbed Mount Everest against all the odds.

This time, with the LNP cosyng up to One Nation, the battle will be just as hard.

In the next term of Parliament, I want a working Labor majority to keep driving Queensland forward and protect our state from the excesses of the LNP.

The stakes in the next election couldn't be higher.

I know how committed you are to our cause.

You are ready and up for the task.

LABOR WILL ALWAYS STAND UP FOR WORKERS

Queensland workers and families don't deserve a repeat of what the LNP did in its last term of government – or worse, what they might do in coalition with One Nation.

They rightly want a decent chance, a fair opportunity.

We must keep building and protecting what matters for Queenslanders.

When the next election is called, each and every one of you will be asked to redouble your efforts -

- To fight for those values we all hold so dear.
- To fight for public ownership of our assets.
- To fight for jobs.
- To fight for frontline services.
- To fight **for Queensland**.

Thank You