



**Queensland**  
Government

The opening  
of the  
first session  
of the  
fifty-sixth Parliament

**Governor's speech**

14 February 2018

## Governor's speech for the opening of Parliament 14 February 2018

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet, and the lands of Queensland generally, and pay my respects to elders past and present.

Following the state election held on the 25th of November 2017 and upon the Electoral Commission of Queensland's declaration of a majority of seats for the Labor Party on the 7th of December 2017, Annastacia Palaszczuk informed me she was in a position to form Government and I asked her to do so.

The full Ministry led by Ms Palaszczuk was sworn in on the 12th of December 2017.

When the first Governor of Queensland, Sir George Bowen opened the first Parliament of Queensland 158 years ago, he said to assembled Members that: *"I now congratulate you on the full attainment of the object of your long-sustained efforts and aspirations in the establishment of this separate and independent Legislature, and on the perfect order, decorum, and good feeling, with which the people of Queensland universally exercised their privilege of self-government."*

I want to add my congratulations to you—as Members of the 56th Queensland Parliament—on your election and your commitment to sustaining this privilege of self-government.

It is an honour to serve in this Parliament.

It is from this House that Members of Parliament make laws and decisions on behalf of the people of Queensland that impact on them in their homes, their workplaces and their communities.

My Government and members of the 56th Parliament have that awesome responsibility before them for the first fixed term in an expanded Chamber.

The term of this Government will be just under three years, with the election date set for the 31st of October 2020.

The Parliament now has ninety-three elected representatives—up from eighty-nine—in the first expansion of the Parliament in 32 years.

Honourable Members, you gather together here bringing different life experiences and expertise from a range of occupations and endeavours.

Unlike the first Parliament opened by Sir George Bowen, this Parliament has strong—but not equal—representation of women and among those is the first Member of Torres Strait descent, the Member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, from Yam Island some 2232 kilometres from here.

You will be making a significant contribution to the opportunities and responsibilities of the Government and the State of Queensland in an era of profound change.

## My Government's priorities

My Government is determined to keep its commitments to Queensland. The Government has delivered 512—or 92.5 per cent—of the 553 commitments it made to the people of Queensland in 2015. Prior to the election in November last year, the Government made more than 490 further commitments to Queenslanders.

My Government will continue to prioritise its work, with business and industry, to create jobs across Queensland.

My Government will continue to restore services, particularly in the areas of health and education, for Queensland families.

My Government will continue to be a consultative one—willing to listen to Queenslanders before acting on their concerns and will continue to put their interests and their issues first.

Those Members sitting on the cross-benches can be assured that my Government's commitment to consult applies equally to them.

They can expect regular briefings on key matters and important legislation that will be put before this Parliament. They can expect the Parliamentary Committee processes to provide scrutiny of the Government's legislative program and its expenditure.

My Government will continue to seek a constructive and consultative relationship with the other levels of government—Queensland's 77 local councils and the Federal Government.

In terms of local government, my Government has pledged to continue its Works for Queensland program to fund job-generating infrastructure projects and has recently signed a memorandum of understanding to harness local councils' role in developing our state's export potential.

In terms of the Federal Government, the Prime Minister agreed to my Government's request to develop a national approach to combat the growing menace of cyberbullying at the meeting of the Council of Australian Governments in Canberra last week.

Cyberbullying is a new and pervasive threat to young Queenslanders, indeed young Australians. Parents feel helpless and children feel defeated. By putting this issue on the national agenda, my Government is determined that we work together to tackle this issue and ensure parents and children have the tools to respond to this problem within their own homes.

Australians look to their governments to work in partnership on the issues that matter, and this has been our resolve on cyberbullying.

My Government is determined to work through a full range of issues with the Federal Government to ensure the best possible outcomes for Queensland.

The Federal Government collects almost 80 per cent of all government revenue. My Government will be seeking Queensland's fair share of funding for infrastructure, health, education and the continuation of the National Partnership Agreements, as well as no reductions in the level of the Goods and Services Tax from the Federal Government.

## **Jobs, the economy and infrastructure**

My Government will once again be focused on jobs and job delivery.

My Government will continue its careful management of our state's finances and economy as well as continuing to deliver surpluses and lower general government debt.

There is nothing more important to economic confidence than employment.

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

Since the 2015 election, my Government has worked with business and industry to create 143,400 jobs in Queensland. That equates to 4200 jobs being created each month or more than 140 every day.

My Government intends to continue the momentum and create even more jobs in this term of office.

Trend unemployment is down to 5.8 per cent from 6.6 per cent when the Government took office, and through programs like Back to Work, Skilling Queenslanders for Work and Works for Queensland, the aim is to drive unemployment even lower.

Commitments made by my Government during the election, including 3500 additional nurses and midwives and at least 3700 additional teachers as well as 100 additional firefighters and 535 police, will support more than 60,000 public and private sector jobs.

More jobs means more people coming to Queensland to pursue new opportunities.

Interstate migration to Queensland is now the highest in nearly a decade.

Business confidence in Queensland is the highest in Australia and consumer confidence is now the second highest.

Queensland's economy has returned to strong growth with the economy expected to grow at 2.75 per cent this year rising to 3 per cent next year.

We will work diligently to continue generating more jobs and providing sustained stability for investment.

My Government is committed to delivering a growing economy that delivers a better quality of living for Queenslanders.

In terms of infrastructure, my Government will drive and promote vital projects to boost economic growth and jobs.

A Bruce Highway Trust will oversee a 15-year forward plan and invest \$1 billion a year to improve the state's longest transport and economic artery, which will assist further economic growth and exports.

The Trust is charged with bringing long-term planning certainty to deliver a 1700 kilometre world-class highway under five-year action plans.

Planning and preliminary work on the \$5.4 billion Cross River Rail project—critical to the transport future of the south-east corner—will gather momentum this year. Cross River Rail will enable us to improve the rest of our transport network with a new commitment to three new stations on the Gold Coast line made during the election campaign.

Bids for the two significant construction packages to build the new rail link are now being evaluated prior to a number of the proponents being shortlisted, and geo-technical work is continuing along the tunnel route.

My Government is committed to upgrading the M1 Highway to at least six lanes along the entire stretch from Brisbane to the border. Contracts have been awarded to construct the Gateway Merge and Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes upgrade and construction works will begin after the Commonwealth Games. My Government has also allocated \$206 million to help fund the upgrade of the southern M1 between Varsity Lakes and Tugun.

Growing the economy for all Queenslanders means working to secure stable manufacturing jobs by actively investing to protect existing jobs, attracting new job creating industries and making our manufacturers more internationally competitive. As promised, my Government has appointed a dedicated Minister for Manufacturing.

My Government is doubling its funding commitment to the Made in Queensland grants, and continues to roll-out the Buy Queensland procurement policy requiring Government to give consideration for local suppliers and provide additional funding to the Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund.

It means further diversifying our economy, and through the Advance Queensland, we are opening up new job-creating frontiers in agriculture, small business, resources, tourism and major events, biofuels, medical technology, defence, information technology and renewable energy.

One of my government's signature policies that sets out to do just that is Advance Queensland, a \$420 million investment in maximising the state's future potential.

To the end of June 2018, we have committed more than \$205 million of this investment to 1650 innovators across Queensland. These projects have supported 4821 jobs.

Advance Queensland is central to my Government's vision to help Queensland open up new frontiers, unlocking the jobs and investment opportunities of the future.

Queensland is well on the way to being the 'Start Up State'—we have overtaken Victoria to now have the second largest number of start-ups in Australia.

The protection of the World Heritage Listed Great Barrier Reef remains a priority as it underpins our tourism industry and supports business, communities and jobs along our east coast.

My Government understands that we all need to work together to build an economy for all Queenslanders—that delivers for the many, and does not leave Queenslanders behind.

My Government will continue its careful management of our state's finances and economy as well as continuing to deliver surpluses and reduce government debt.

In October this year, Queensland will mark another significant milestone in its history, with the state's population set to reach five million people.

This milestone highlights, not only the growth of our state, but the importance of the role for government as a service provider and a generator of opportunities.

For its second term, my Government has rededicated itself to the priorities of job creation, provision of world-class health services, quality education for young Queenslanders and reskilling for those in—or seeking to re-join—the workforce.

## **Health**

Queenslanders deserve access to quality health care.

My Government will employ an extra 3500 nurses and midwives, after employing 4160 nurses, 1600 doctors and 1200 allied health professionals.

My Government has committed a further \$154 million to maintain downward pressure on waiting times for hospital specialist appointments and build on the success of the Specialist Outpatient Strategy.

My Government will continue to invest in health infrastructure, including expansions of hospitals at Logan, Caboolture and Ipswich.

In terms of mental health, we are building a new facility to replace the Barrett Adolescent Centre closed in 2014, despite the heartfelt pleas of young people who were desperate for the centre to remain open. Construction of a new integrated facility at Prince Charles Hospital is top priority with construction proper to commence this year.

We are doing this across our frontline services, including education, police, ambulance and fire services.

## **Education**

Education is a priority for Queensland families and for my Government.

My Government has committed to the employment of at least 3700 new teachers over the next four years and it will build 10 new schools, plan for another seven and upgrade 17 secondary schools and refurbish TAFEs.

Within those classrooms, my Government will:

- deliver the rollout of the digital technologies curriculum, including robotics and coding to all schools and encourage more students to study the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics;
- provide four innovation centres of professional learning and well-being for teachers and students in rural and remote Queensland;
- actively re-engage at-risk youth in schools of alternative education; and
- complete the roll-out of a new senior assessment and tertiary entrance system to replace the OP system.

## **Regional Queensland**

My Government knows the strength of Queensland is its people drawn from across the state.

From this precinct of only 1.7 hectares, the Parliament makes decisions impacting on Queenslanders spread over 1.7 million square kilometres—from Mornington Island to Morningside and further afield.

There are significant challenges in rural and regional Queensland.

My Government knows an investment in people will ensure those Queenslanders have the best possible access to services and the best possible opportunity to contribute so much to our state.

My Government also knows that to sustain rural and remote communities we have to do more than ensure they are well served, but are well placed to prosper amid challenges of droughts, flooding rains, the vagaries of international commodity markets and access to labour.

Across Queensland, our infrastructure investment, our Back to Work, Works for Queensland and Jobs and Regional Growth Fund will be maintained to continue creating jobs beyond the south-east corner.

My Government is committed to working in partnership with key industries such as tourism, agriculture, construction, resources and energy—as well as promoting new jobs and opportunities through large scale renewables, biofuels, advanced manufacturing and start-ups to attract new investment and create new jobs.

Through our Back to Work program, any regional Queensland employer who takes on a jobseeker aged under 25 years is eligible for support of up to \$20,000.

That program has been extended to regional Queensland employers because it helps them hire staff they need in their businesses.

Similarly, the Works for Queensland program is now in its second \$200 million round, supporting local councils deliver job-generating projects in their communities.

After listening to councils who know the benefits locally, my Government has committed to a further \$200 million for a third round.

In recognition of the challenges and opportunities in regional Queensland, my Government will continue its initiative of Governing from the Regions and during this term, the Parliament will move for a sitting in the state's regions.

## Ice

The increasing prevalence of crystal methamphetamine, or the dangerous drug ice, is having significant adverse impacts across our communities, including the regions.

The disproportionate levels of harm it can cause, as well as the involvement of organised crime in the production, supply and distribution of ice necessitates a coordinated government response to tackle this growing problem.

The final action plan on ice has been released.

Developed in consultation with experts and those touched by this drug, it puts ice within the broader context of responding to alcohol and other drugs with a focus on three key areas of action:



- reducing the supply through law enforcement;
- reducing demand through prevention, early intervention and treatment; and
- addressing specific harms of ice use through specialised programs, services and initiatives to support individuals, families and the workforce.

My Government's Action on Ice plan also provides the framework for Queensland's implementation of the National Ice Action Strategy.

### **Legislative program**

My Government will continue on an extensive legislative program and delivering on commitments it has made to create jobs, provide greater protection for Queensland and strengthen integrity of public administration in this state.

Among the legislation my Government plans to introduce this Parliament will include:

- establishing the promised Land Restoration Fund and reinstating, as promised, the workable vegetation management controls to provide for sustainable agriculture and protect the environment and the Great Barrier Reef;
- a ban on political donations from property developers in accordance with the recommendations of the Crime and Corruption Commission;
- establishing the Healthy Futures Commission as an independent statutory body to work with local government, business and government agencies to assist Queensland families to make healthy choices, including efforts to tackle obesity;
- extra protections for Queenslanders when buying a car;
- a clamp down on renegade tow-truck operators by introducing licensing and standards for all operators including capped fees to protect motorists; and
- a new licensing scheme for plumbers to extend their work to mechanical and gas fitting.

My Government will also continue to work in partnership with other governments to ensure our counter-terrorism laws keep Queenslanders safe and are fit for purpose.

## 2018 – Commonwealth Games and Centenary of ANZAC

2018 is a momentous year for Queensland.

In April, Queensland will host its largest ever event—the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games—with more than 6600 athletes from 70 nations across the Commonwealth converging on our state.

They will draw a global audience of more than 1.5 billion people. Queensland, like it was for the 1982 Brisbane Commonwealth Games and Expo '88, will be showcased to the world.

My Government, in partnership with the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation (GOLDOC), has ensured all venues and preparations are in place for a family-friendly games.

My Government is also working to ensure the success of athletes is emulated for business, by setting a strong trade focus with Commonwealth House and detailed plans for the legacy of the venues and their future use.

2018 also marks the centenary of the end of the Great War, then described as “the war to end all wars”.

The Centenary, which concludes this year, has given all of us an opportunity to remember the price paid by those who have always stood up to protect our rights and our nation over the past century.

In 1918, my predecessor Governor Sir Hamilton John Goold-Adams stood in this place opening Parliament and acknowledged the loss of life and supreme sacrifice of so many brave Queenslanders in the Great War.

In his speech, he noted the Government of that time was concentrated on making adequate provision for the soldiers who would return home, and a considerable number were eventually settled on Crown land and started farming.

A century later, my Government will introduce a number of new measures to better support our veterans, ex-Australian Defence Force personnel and their families in recognition of their service and their sacrifice.

The Premier has responsibility for Veterans Affairs, and she is supported by an Assistant Minister for State and Veterans Affairs.

My Government will extend the 50 per cent discount off public transport to the 19,000 DVA white card holders in Queensland who are under the age of 64—and 35,000 existing veterans who currently hold DVA gold cards can access Queensland’s public transport discounts.

My Government will:

- trial a public service employment program to identify at least a 100 jobs for veterans each year;
- expand the income eligibility for the Bond Loan and Rental Grants program;
- establish the North Queensland defence personnel support hub in Townsville; and
- provide a \$1.5 million grants program over three years for the upkeep of memorials and monuments.

## Conclusion

The men and women who willingly served our nation and sacrificed their own lives in wars and conflicts did so to ensure the rights we enjoy today were always protected.

Honourable Members, the independent Legislature—that Sir George Bowen referred to when he first opened the first Parliament—remains a precious adornment of democratic and everyday life in Queensland.

I wish all Honourable Members well as they go about their duties serving Queenslanders in our 56th Parliament.

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