

NWQROC – 2020 State Election Platform

LNP Response

From: Warrego Electorate Office <Warrego@parliament.qld.gov.au>

Sent: Monday, 12 October 2020 11:49 AM

To: Greg Hoffman PSM <NWQROC@carpentaria.qld.gov.au>

Subject: NWQROC 2020 State Election Platform

Dear Cr Bawden

Reference is made to the 2020 State Election Platform to *Supercharge the North West & Queensland* wherein you were seeking election commitments in relation to the NWQROC Platform. We appreciate receiving this document and look forward to providing the ROC and the eight Member Councils with the support needed to help deliver your initiatives over the coming years.

While the outcome of this election will determine who will lead Queensland through its first fixed four-year Parliamentary term, it is far more than that. It is about Queensland's future and who will guide it through the biggest economic crisis in almost a century.

The LNP recognises that the key role that NWQROC plays as the peak advocate for your member councils. As such, we are fully committed to working respectfully and cooperatively with you to progress your priorities for transport services, energy, water and waste, community, environment and economic development.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has a poor track record when it comes to infrastructure and has demonstrated an inability to manage the economy. In addition to accumulating massive debt, the following failures are no doubt of concern to you as they have implications for NWQROC and its member councils:-

- The \$9 billion Labor cut from infrastructure spending in its first term
- Underfunding the renewal of the existing road network by \$5.418 billion resulting in risks to the sustainability of the transport network
- Nine new taxes over the past term of Government, ripping nearly \$4 billion out of Queensland's economy
- Cancelling its budget in 2020

Based on a range of metrics, it is widely accepted that Queensland was already in an economic crisis before COVID-19 and not because of it. Annastacia Palaszczuk was the last Premier to announce an economic stimulus package but the first and only Premier to cancel the budget. In its latest research paper, the Queensland Productivity Commission warned that a return to regular policy settings post-COVID would be a disaster. Furthermore, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIQ) has called out the Government's economic recovery plan as nothing more than "a rehash of announcements" leaving businesses "meandering through COVID without any real plan".

Our Economic Plan

The LNP has an ambitious plan to stimulate the economy, create a decade of secure jobs and lead Queensland out of this recession. Our vision is to make Queensland the economic powerhouse of Australia once again, the best place to get a job, get ahead and raise a family.

Our plan for a stronger economy and secure jobs is based on four foundations:

- Investing for growth
- Unleashing Queensland industry
- Supercharging the regions
- Securing our children's future

Our economic plan includes policies such as investing in road infrastructure to stimulate the economy, building six regional dams to improve water and food security, including the drought-busting New Bradfield Scheme and a no new tax guarantee to support private sector investment. The New Bradfield Scheme will create Australia's

biggest dam and generate enough hydro-electricity to power 800,000 homes as the biggest renewable energy project in Queensland.

Economic Recovery Agency

To lead Queensland out of recession and create jobs, a co-ordinated economic reconstruction is needed. Accordingly, we will establish an Agency to kickstart major stimulus projects across the state. In a similar way that a reconstruction authority takes charge in a disaster, the *Economic Recovery Agency* will have the power to cut through Labor's red tape and get shovels in the ground by coordinating a program of works under the wide-ranging powers of the Coordinator-General.

The Economic Recovery Agency's first 100-day action plan will be to coordinate:

- An immediate audit of stalled major projects and fast-tracking approvals across all government agencies
- The establishment of the Queensland Dam Company to progress six regional dams including delivering the New Bradfield Scheme
- Fixing Paradise Dam utilising international expert advice
- Issuing the tender documents for the \$1 billion South-East Queensland congestion busting infrastructure
- Fast-tracking approvals for the Second M1
- Delivering 4 new ICE rehab centres
- Promoting Queensland as the low tax state for investment because of our "no new taxes" policy
- Implementing our Queensland Investment Partnerships to secure \$1 billion of private sector investment
- Reducing water prices for SunWater irrigators by almost 20%
- Establishing our Industry Skills Council to ensure vocational training is meeting skills shortages
- Fast-tracking air-conditioning every school classroom to support local tradie jobs
- Water security options assessment for the Darling Downs, in partnership with the Toowoomba Regional Council

NWQROC State Election Platform

The LNP will work collaboratively with NWQROC and its member Councils in a strategic partnership approach towards the economic recovery of the region. To ensure Queensland's regions can rebuild from the impacts of COVID-19 and grow stronger into the future, we have improved the State Procurement Policy to ensure increasing opportunities for Councils.

Importantly in relation to local council workforces, the LNP would explore every avenue to assist councils maintain their workforces and secure work for local contractors. We have raised tender exemptions for local governments in drought-affected areas with our Federal colleagues. To this end, we recently announced that the LNP supports the proposal for Queensland Local Governments in drought-affected areas to have closed tenders for Federal Government road projects, as well as exemptions from pre-qualification requirements to maintain council workforces.

In terms of backing local councils, the LNP was the first party to support the LGAQ's Battleplan. The LNP takes its economic management responsibilities seriously and will deliver a full State Budget within the first 100 days of forming government. We have already announced a range of measures to turn around the negative economic impacts of COVID-19. Our initiatives will be closely aligned to the needs of local communities such as those outlined by NWQROC.

In addition to the measures already announced, the LNP provides the following commitments in support of your plan:-

1. Roads and Transport

The LNP has an ambitious plan to stimulate the economy, create a decade of secure jobs and lead Queensland out of recession. It is considered that this approach will help to deliver a safe and efficient road and transport network. Our plan includes policies to invest in road infrastructure through funding programs such as Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program (QTRIP) and TIDS.

The current pressures on the economy makes funding certainty ever more crucial. An LNP Government commits to working with Councils and the Federal Government with the aim of establishing more strategic and long-term funding arrangements for the region.

In terms of air route supply, we would seek the involvement of the Queensland Productivity Commission to examine the current arrangements and to make recommendations for improving the situation. This would include examining the feasibility of east-west flights between Longreach and Rockhampton.

The LNP also considers there is merit in evaluating the best management and operating model for the Karumba Port. This would help to ensure the Port can support the ongoing development of Northern Australia and create long term job opportunities.

2. Water and Waste

Through proper funding, we will support the sustainable management of natural land and water resources. We will establish the Queensland Dam Company to progress the building of new dams and support region-shaping water projects. Our economic plan includes building the drought-busting New Bradfield Scheme which will harness the monsoonal rains of the North and take them West to irrigate an area the size of Tasmania. This ambitious scheme will support 2,000 megawatts of hydro-electricity which is enough to power 800,000 homes with green energy.

If elected on 31 October 2020, the LNP will work with Seqwater, Sunwater and local governments to undertake a state-wide water asset audit to unlock the jobs that can be created through opening access to key water infrastructure. The audit will inform the development of a 30-year water security plan for Queensland. Part of the water asset audit will put forward a plan for the drinking needs of communities right across the state.

This will be undertaken through a Drinking Water Taskforce (to be announced at the LGAQ annual conference) comprised of local government members and industry experts. This will identify future community drinking water needs for the next 30 years and establish those which need to be fast tracked for expansion of critical water supplies.

To ensure councils can continue to provide leadership in building a sustainable future and can care for our unique natural assets, we are committed to maintaining the waste levy. This will support more opportunities for resource recovery, recycling and mitigating landfill challenges. It is clear there remains considerable potential for realistic waste management strategies and so a new LNP Government will work closely with local governments to achieve better outcomes.

We understand the need to expand opportunities for resource recovery going forward. It is disappointing that the levy has not been more vigorously used to develop Queensland's recycling industries. In the future, we would be keen to put more emphasis on this aspect whilst working in partnership with Local Governments.

3. Energy and Connectivity

The LNP is pleased to reaffirm our commitment to drive down the high cost of electricity for consumers and businesses. Under the LNP energy policy, households are likely to be \$300 a year better off. This will be achieved through structural reform of our government-owned generators, as well as introducing retail competition in regional Queensland.

An energy audit will examine how we can bring down bills for industry with the options to be explored including lowering the regional reference price, as well as increasing generation in the North-West, including support for the CopperString 2.0 project. We also support the transparent identification of available fibre optic networks across the North West to help facilitate local digital connectivity projects.

Front and centre of the LNP's plan to stimulate the economy is backing our great manufacturing businesses which employ 163,000 Queenslanders. That is why we recently announced an LNP Government will cut their electricity costs by around 20%. We will do this by providing a Community Service Obligation to Energy Queensland. This will remove the need for Ergon and Energex to charge manufacturing businesses a rate of return on electricity provided through the distribution networks.

The LNP supports manufacturing and renewable energy. We have recently released policies aimed at the local manufacture of renewable energy components and would welcome the opportunity of growing new businesses with you that are built on the region's renewable energy resources.

The LNP will commit another \$8 million for minerals exploration in the North-West and will also cut the crippling electricity costs faced by the minerals sector. We will supercharge the North-West economy and drive minerals wealth and jobs all the way from Mount Isa to Townsville and it is time Labor got on board.

Supercharging the North West Minerals Province will allow Queensland to capitalise on the growing demand for new economy minerals for batteries and renewables. Clean energy technologies will create new industries - providing jobs and job security for regional Queensland. We support the integration of the North West Minerals Province into the National Electricity Market as a key part of realising the full potential of this Province.

4. Community and Environment

Through proper funding, we will support the sustainable management of natural land and water resources. An LNP Government will work with industry and councils in enhancing the effectiveness of all Biosecurity Queensland operations, as well as the 'good neighbour' policy currently used between protected area estates and neighbouring landholders. Furthermore, the LNP has a plan to bolster and refocus the state's war on pests and weeds which we are losing under Labor.

In conjunction with NWQROC, the LNP will examine measures to address the housing shortage in Western Queensland communities. We will improve the affordability of housing and introduce measures such as the recently announced land tax discount to stimulate investment. Under the LNP's new scheme, land tax will be slashed by 75 per cent and exemptions on international investor taxes would be provided on eligible build-to-rent projects. We will also work closely with our Federal colleagues on measures such as the extension to the First Home Loan deposit scheme.

5. Regionally Focussed Policy and Partnerships

In relation to unlocking private sector investment, the LNP has announced our plan to establish Queensland Investment Partnerships to cut red and green tape and attract \$1billion in new infrastructure investment in Queensland over the next four years. In this regard, we are sure there would be merit from receiving proposals from councils – particularly for projects involving tourism, housing, water and technology. Furthermore, we would partner with Councils in streamlining the approvals process to increase economic development and supports local jobs.

The LNP appreciates the key role the NWQROC plays in coordinating strategic policy initiatives and facilitating collaboration between levels of government and industry. In order to achieve broad-based community outcomes, the LNP agrees on the need for all levels of government to work productively together for the benefit of member Councils and the communities they represent.

The LNP recognises that the operations of the NWQROC and indeed, the 77 Councils across the State would benefit from more secure funding to support the excellent work they are undertaking on an ongoing basis. This is why an LNP Government will work relentlessly to identify every possible funding source, including with the Federal Government, as well as eliminate Labor's waste, so that we can enable Councils to end up in a better position. At this point, we are sure the NWQROC recognises that in the absence of a full budget, to attach specific monetary amounts to individual programs beyond what has already been indicated, would be irresponsible.

Conclusion

It should be acknowledged that the public balance sheet alone cannot dig Queensland out of trouble. The state will urgently need the support of the private sector to get the recovery going. This is the reason we have committed to a no new tax guarantee to encourage private sector investment in projects all across the State.

It is our contention that Queenslanders want a plan to stimulate the economy and provide a decade of secure jobs – and that is what the LNP will deliver. Our commitment to building a stronger economy will enable more investment in the initiatives being sought by NWQROC. Further commitments will be made in the lead-up to the election on 31 October and we will update you as these are announced.

Yours sincerely

**Ann Leahy MP -- Member for Warrego
Shadow Minister for Local Government**

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