



**Steven Miles**  
DEPUTY PREMIER OF QUEENSLAND

WORKING TOGETHER FOR QUEENSLAND

25 October 2020

Ms Ellen Beaumont  
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Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW)  
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Dear Ms Beaumont

Thank you for your letters of 2 October 2020 regarding your Queensland Election Platform 2020.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government's strong health response to the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that we can now start to deliver our plan for economic recovery. We have a proud record in health investment and supporting Queensland's social workers across a number of sectors.

Each of the key professional issues raised in your platform are also important to the Palaszczuk Labor Government.

### **1. Social Work Registration**

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is committed to supporting high professional practice and standards. If re-elected we would be happy to meet with AASW to discuss in more detail your views about statutory registration of social workers.

### **2. Mental Health**

If re-elected, the Palaszczuk Labor Government has committed to deliver a \$100 million plan for supporting student well-being, to provide students with direct access to a health professional at school if they are feeling anxious, worried or stressed.

This will support students who need it the most, give parents greater peace of mind knowing support is there for their children, and allow teachers to focus on their job of teaching.

Under this plan, we will employ 464 additional health and well-being professionals in our schools to support the mental health and well-being of students in every primary and secondary state school in Queensland. The plan will also place general practitioners in 20 state secondary schools in areas of greatest need, providing access to medical care and advice free of charge in a familiar environment.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has also announced an additional investment of \$46.5 million in mental health over two years as part of our economic recovery strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it, increased anxiety and psychological distress for individuals, families and societies, compounded by social isolation and economic hardship. Economic analysis of the impacts of the pandemic across regions suggest significant short-term and ongoing challenges particularly in areas reliant on tourism, construction and associated service industries. These impacts align with increasing demand for public mental health and alcohol and other services. Queensland Health reports increases in new mental health referrals, provisions of service and numbers of individuals accessing treatment and care each week, with self-harm or suicidal ideation presentations increasing at emergency departments. Queensland Ambulance

Service reports a 20 per cent increase in mental health related incidences coming through to Triple Zero. Alcohol and other drug use has also increased.

In response, a significant amount of our government's additional investment is directed towards addressing economic and social impacts on mental health and wellbeing with targeted interventions in areas most affected. \$37 million is allocated to fund additional services in Cairns and Hinterland, Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Mackay, Central Queensland, West Moreton, Wide Bay and Brisbane (Metro South and Metro North) HHS regions (including Children's Health Queensland HHS). We recognise there is no 'one size fits all' approach: the range of responses in these areas will take into account existing programs, resources and local capacity along with local needs. The aim is to improve the range of responsive service types which are integrated across acute and ongoing care and in partnership with other providers such as primary care, NGOs, private providers and other government agencies.

We have also allocated \$3.5 million for grants directly to rural councils, for those councils to use for localised mental health responses.

Additionally, we are investing \$3.18 million to provide additional capacity for alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation services delivered by non-government organisations. It is expected that as the community shifts into a post or extended COVID phase there will be a wave of new clients seeking treatment, in addition to people who have been in treatment previously.

\$3 million is being provided to enhance specialist mental health responses to the impacts on people's mental health and wellbeing in quarantine.

A further \$2.5 million will go towards enhancing support for people in the community experiencing a mental health crisis by expanding mental health co-responder services. Mental health co-responder services currently operated by Queensland Ambulance Service in conjunction with Queensland Health will be further expanded to the Sunshine Coast region. This will augment the existing programs in Metro South, Gold Coast and West Moreton and three new programs being established in Metro North, Townsville and Cairns. These programs will be extended to provide service 10 hours per day, 7 days per week to meet increased demand.

The Mental Health Co-responder program pairs a senior mental health clinician and a senior paramedic to respond to people experiencing a mental health crisis. By attending in the person's home there can be a quicker resolution of crisis situations with 65 per cent treated and able to remain at home. This initiative also complements the work of existing senior mental health clinicians in QAS Brisbane Operations Centre who can interact directly with patients.

Finally, \$4 million is allocated to providing additional support to young people whose mental health has been affected by the economic and social changes through a new Moderated Online Social Therapy program (MOST). MOST is a digital youth mental health platform being developed in partnership with Orygen, a specialist youth mental health not for profit organisation and world leading youth mental health research and service group. This will leverage investment from the Children's Health Foundation, Commonwealth Government and other private sources.

The platform will enable young people to access an online clinician and peer support, career consultants, an online resource toolkit, moderated social networking and tailored online therapy fully integrated with existing face-to-face mental health clinical care. This initiative supports and adjuncts mental health treatment for young people, responding to the mental health challenges being experienced as a result of the uncertainty and physical/social isolation impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our government's investment supports a two-year pilot of MOST.

This builds on our other recently announced initiatives which ensure access to high quality health care for some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders, including:

- \$10.8 million for the establishment of Crisis Support Spaces in eight hospitals across Queensland, including Cairns, Mackay, Metro North, Metro South, Gold Coast, Townsville, West Moreton and Wide Bay
- Expanding the award-winning Navigate Your Health program to the Far North, ensuring children and young people in care or engaged with the youth justice system stay up to date
- Investing \$655,000 to secure four specialist Nurse Navigators, based at Cairns Hospital
- Early works which have begun for the new \$91 million, 50-bed Acute Mental Health Unit to be built at Ipswich Hospital
- Act for Kids have been provided with extra space at Woolloowin's Warilda Community Centre and can double their service capacity to assist at-risk children and families
- More than \$30 million into more than 130 of Queensland's community-based health service groups to ensure their vital services can continue to support Queenslanders during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future
- A brand new \$70 million state of the art mental health facility for Cairns
- The opening of the new \$27 million, 12-bed adolescent mental health treatment centre, Jacaranda Place.

Our record on health stands in stark contrast to the LNP. Over 4,800 health workers, including 1,800 nurses and midwives were sacked by the former LNP government and \$45 million in funding was cut from mental health – the single biggest cut ever made by an Australian state or territory government.

When Deb Frecklington was Campbell Newman's Assistant Minister, they cut \$4.4 million from the annual Queensland Health grants scheme, which included cuts to funding for alcohol and drug prevention workers, nutrition promotion and healthy lifestyle programs.

### 3. Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has done more than any previous Queensland Government to address gender inequality, and to prevent domestic, family, and sexual violence. If re-elected the programs we have put in place will be built upon as we pursue our objective of a Queensland that is free from domestic and family violence.

In 2015, the Palaszczuk Labor Government immediately moved to implement the recommendations of the landmark *Not Now, Not Ever Report*. We began our response with developing and implementing the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-26. Since 2015, we have spent almost \$555 million to bring an end to domestic and family violence.

Our Queensland Women's Strategy 2016-2021 sets out the programs and commitment to advancing women and eliminating gender inequality in Queensland and will be renewed when it expires.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government supports continuing judicial education for judicial officers, especially in relation to domestic and family violence. Since 2016-17, professional development opportunities have been arranged for Queensland Magistrates on domestic and family violence related topics.

Magistrates who preside over domestic and family violence case lists attend a dedicated two-day annual Domestic and Family Violence Conference. In addition, domestic and family violence related sessions are scheduled for the Magistrates Annual State and Regional Conferences. In 2018, the National Judicial College of Australia delivered *Family Violence in the Court* training to 50 Queensland Magistrates, as part of a national roll out of training, providing judicial officers with specialist training about the nature and dynamics of family violence to assist better decision making when hearing domestic and family violence matters.

### 4. Child Protection

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has made an unprecedented investment in child protection since 2015 and has implemented significant reforms to Queensland's child protection and family support system.

We have allocated over \$728 million since 2015 and funded more than 550 new staff. As a consequence, the average case load per child safety officer is around 18 or below for the 10th consecutive quarter – down from 21 under the former LNP Government.

Despite this investment and reform, our system faces increasing pressure, and we know there is more work to be done.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has sought to establish a bipartisan approach to child protection in Queensland. This is an initiative of Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, who proposed a new approach in which both sides of politics work together to ensure the child safety system in Queensland is the best it can possibly be, with the ultimate aim of protecting vulnerable children.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will continue to pursue bipartisanship on child safety policy, but we want to make clear that this will not come at the price of surrendering our principles and supporting some of the misguided policies advanced by the LNP. Such Opposition proposals include renaming the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women as the Child Protection Force, and adopting a rank structure akin to that of the Queensland Police Service. We are focused on policies that are more than window dressing; that will bring about tangible change and improved outcomes.

One of our proudest achievements in child protection is the deployment of large-scale early intervention programs and services. The evidence shows that these programs and services work and there is no intention to reverse them.

*Our Way: a generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037* articulates the Government's commitment to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037.

Key achievements delivered so far include rolling out 33 community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services, establishing the Queensland First Children and Families Board, and amending the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

If re-elected, in partnership with the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak organisation, the Palaszczuk Labor Government plans to increase the number of regions and community controlled organisations, where the community controlled organisation has delegated authority to make decisions and the cultural authority of the elders.

## **5. Homelessness**

In June 2017, the Palaszczuk Labor Government released the \$1.8 billion Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–2027 to provide pathways to safe, secure and sustainable housing for Queenslanders. A key initiative of the Strategy is the Housing Construction Jobs Program (HCJP), a \$1.6 billion program which will create 4522 social housing and 1034 affordable housing homes over the next 10 years.

Our Housing Construction Jobs Program encourages partnerships with the private sector and community housing providers to deliver jobs, drive economic growth at a local level and ensure better community outcomes. This investment has supported more than 1800 construction industry full time equivalent jobs for trades and builders.

In the first three years, HCJP contracts were awarded for the commencement of 1949 new homes, exceeding the three-year target of 1700. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Palaszczuk Labor Government has continued to build new homes and deliver a pipeline of work for local trades and builders which will continue over the life of the Housing Construction Jobs Program.

We remain on track to meet our five-year target to commence 2972 new homes throughout the state, with a further 473 new homes targeted to commence by the end of June 2021.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government is committed to growing Queensland's social and affordable housing stock. It would be devastating to Queensland's building industry and place thousands of Queenslanders at risk of homelessness if our program was cut and social housing stock sold off by the LNP to pay for their unfunded election promises.

Our economic recovery plan includes a further boost to social housing through the Works for Tradies Program. This program is all about providing homes for Queenslanders in need. The \$100 million investment into this program will see 215 new social housing homes built across Queensland, with construction on projects to commence by the end of 2020-21.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has also secured agreement with two leading national builders to develop the first two affordable housing projects under the Build-To-Rent program. Build-to-Rent provides secure, long-term rental accommodation for tenants who don't necessarily qualify for access to social housing but may struggle to live close to where they work. This is part of our commitment to ensuring Queenslanders have access to affordable housing.

## **6. Reconciliation**

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has embarked on a Path to Treaty, which is a once in a lifetime opportunity to reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and non-Indigenous Queenslanders. Our government is committed to this process. It aims to recognise and accept our shared history and create a more just and fair future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people to walk together on this path.

Establishing a treaty or agreement making process - based on mutual understanding, respect and recognition - with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders will be fundamental to improving life outcomes for the first peoples of this state. Treaty will give First Nations people a platform to negotiate improved policies, programs and services for communities.

Our government has also partnered with the Australian Government and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations to finalise the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The agreement includes 16 targets, double the number set in 2008, to improve outcomes in education, employment, social and emotional well-being, language preservation and housing as well as reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice and child safety systems and preventing domestic and family violence.

In August of this year the Palaszczuk Labor Government made a commitment to support the implementation of the new national Closing the Gap agreement, with \$9.3 million as part of a national joint funding effort with the federal government and other states and territories. Importantly, it sees Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play the lead role in decision-making and reflects the Queensland Government's commitment to significant reforms towards reframing the relationship in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will also retain Courts, like the Murri Court and the Drug and Alcohol Court, that act to break the cycle of offending.

The LNP have already indicated that they will introduce a "three-strike policy" which research has shown disproportionately affects First Nations Peoples. That kind of policy making would only take Queensland backwards.

Similarly, their policy of imposing a curfew on young people in Cairns and Townsville, and of fining parents when juveniles are found to be out after curfew without reasonable excuse, have been criticised by justice advocates who warn the move could encourage vigilantes to target Indigenous children after dark.

The reality is that curfews do not work – the UN guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency note that curfews ‘stigmatise, victimise and criminalise young people.’

## **7. Aged Care**

While the Federal Government has jurisdiction over aged care, the Palaszczuk Labor Government is aware of the increased need for palliative care services in Queensland.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will invest an additional \$171 million in palliative care. This will be the biggest single injection of palliative care funding in Queensland’s history and will include:

- developing a new Palliative and End-of-Life Care Strategy to strengthen and reform palliative and end-of-life care by providing improved equity of access and choice for Queenslanders
- investing \$102.5 million to employ more front-line palliative care staff to look after Queenslanders
- investing \$54.8 million for community-based service providers to deliver home-based hospice care for adults and children and after-hours services delivered through Hospital and Health Services
- enhancing palliative care digital services and telehealth support for patient and for staff, and
- launching a 24/7 hotline to provide support to palliative care practitioners
- delivering additional palliative care public education and advocacy, including advice on Advanced Care Directives, Wills and Enduring Powers of Attorney.

This investment builds on our launch of Ambulance Wish Queensland in 2019, which grants terminally ill Queenslanders the dying wishes they would otherwise be unable to experience. Since its launch, Ambulance Wish has helped many Queenslanders including visits to the beach, eating their favourite ice-cream and meeting their great grandchild for the first time. We have also committed \$195,000 for Palliative Care Queensland to fund more staff and resources so the Wish Ambulance can keep granting wishes.

The Premier has also made a commitment that a re-elected Labor Government will introduce legislation into the Queensland Parliament in February 2021 to provide for a vote on voluntary assisted dying, and that Labor members will be given a conscience vote on the Bill.

A re-elected Palaszczuk Labor Government will also develop and implement a strategy to address social isolation and loneliness. A Parliamentary inquiry will be commenced during the first 12 months of the new Parliament to inform this work. We will also fund the Ways to Wellness pilot in Mt Gravatt for 3 years, an amount of \$300,000. This is an innovative program seeking to address the challenge of social isolation and loneliness through a social prescribing network.

## **8. Refugee and People seeking asylum**

The Federal Government has sole responsibility for immigration matters, including immigration policy and border control; visa grants and conditions; policy, funding and delivery of settlement support programs.

However, since 2018, the Palaszczuk Labor Government has had no choice but to step in and provide critical assistance due to the acute unaddressed needs of refugees and asylum seekers by the current LNP Federal Government.

The Palaszczuk Labor Government has actively engaged with the Morrison Government on many occasions; however, the response has been an unwillingness to change the current process for detention at those locations.

Since 2017-18 the Palaszczuk Labor Government has provided \$4.6 million to Communitify Queensland to coordinate across seven collaborating agencies in the Asylum Seeker and Refugee Assistance (ASRA) program for the delivery of financial, case management, and mental health assistance to people seeking asylum and vulnerable refugees on temporary visas in Queensland.

In the last quarter alone, the ASRA program provided support to 612 clients from refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds including those who hold Safe Haven Enterprise Visas (SHEVs), Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and Final Departure Bridging Visa Es (FDBVEs).

Now is not the time to risk the LNP's cuts. Queensland's ongoing economic and health recovery requires leadership and stability, and Deb Frecklington and the LNP are a risk to our recovery.

I urge you to communicate this message with your members and supporters. Should the Palaszczuk Government be re-elected, we look forward to working with you for the benefit of all Queenslanders.

Yours sincerely



**STEVEN MILES MP**  
**Deputy Premier**  
**Minister for Health**  
**Minister for Ambulance Services**