

Barton Deakin Brief: Queensland Election 2017

3 November 2017

On the weekend, the Queensland Premier, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP announced that the QLD State Election will be held on Saturday 25 November 2017. This came after Acting Governor, the Honourable Chief Justice Catherine Holmes approved the dissolution of Queensland Parliament, and issued a writ for the state election to be held.

This Barton Deakin Brief explains the background to the election, and key policy issues that have been announced over the first five days of the LNP’s campaign.

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Background

In May this year, after a mandated electoral redistribution came into effect, the Assembly expanded from 89 to 93 seats, and a number of seats were renamed to reflect boundary changes. This election will also mark the implementation of the first compulsory preferential voting system in a Queensland state election. A summary of each parties’ standings under the new boundaries is as follows:

Parties	ALP	LNP	PHON	KAP	Independents	TOTAL
Seats on current margin	42	41	1	2	3	89
Seats on new notional margin*	48	42	N/A	2	1	93

* New notional margins are based on voting patterns from the 2015 state election.

Election commentary regarding opinion polls suggests that the state-wide two-party preferred vote in Queensland is not necessarily indicative of a win for either major Party due to the high third-party vote, predominantly those votes for Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party (One Nation). The Labor Party’s Queensland branch has ruled out a preference swap deal with One Nation and similar independents, as it has done since 1998. If, after the election, neither major party is able to form a majority in their own right or in coalition with a minor party, a new election would be held.



After Labor's retraction of endorsement for MP Rick Williams on 27 October 2017, the party's seat count dropped to 41. This was equal to that of the LNP, prompting Premier Palaszczuk to call a snap election, well before the constitutional requirement for a general election to be held by 5 May 2018.

This is the last Queensland election under non-fixed three-year terms. Following a referendum in 2016, Queensland will transition to fixed four-year terms, with subsequent elections to be held on the last Saturday of October every four years. Under this legislation's provisions, the next election after this year's, is due to be held on Saturday 31 October 2020.

LNP Policy Announcements

Thus far, the LNP has revealed two major business-related policy announcements during the campaign:

1. Payroll tax threshold plan; and
2. Dam construction plan.

Payroll Tax

The LNP has committed to lifting the payroll tax threshold for businesses by \$25,000 per year for ten years, to tackle unemployment and boost Queensland's small businesses. This means the current threshold of \$1.1 million will increase by \$250,000 to \$1.35 million in one decade. LNP Leader Tim Nicholls has explained that this will benefit 14,000 businesses in the first year, and longer term, will aim to create 500,000 jobs.

The LNP's economic blueprint for lowering the cost of living and creating jobs was released on Monday, highlighting that medium-sized businesses with payrolls of up to \$6.75 million would receive a reduction, while large corporations would still pay payroll tax at the full rate. Mr Nicholls has indicated that the policy would cost the budget \$100 million across the first four years, and around \$500 million across 10 years.

Dam Construction

Today, the LNP announced plans to build dams right across regional Queensland, including the construction of the Urannah Dam, Nullinga Dam, Rookwood Weir and the raising of Burdekin Falls Dam, to deliver more jobs and undertake significant regional development to achieve cheaper electricity and abundant water supply. In conjunction, the LNP has committed to investing \$225 million into upgrading the Haughton Channel in Townsville, and duplicating the Ross River Dam Pipeline.

Notably, Stage 1 of the Urannah Dam site is located in the Broken River Valley, and has an estimated cost of 780 million, with a storage capacity of 863,000 megalitres (ML) of water. This dam would have the capacity to yield 146,000 ML a year, equal to 1.7 Sydney Harbours. The LNP would commence the feasibility study within the first hundred days of government, and plans to contribute \$10 million to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Urannah, Nullinga and Burdekin Falls.

The Burdekin Falls Dam would be raised by two metres under an LNP government, which will increase storage capacity by 590,000 ML to 2,446,000 ML. The State Government would seek a \$10 million-equivalent contribution from the Federal Government towards the EIS. This obligation comes as a plan to compensate for future demand from Townsville, and from the agriculture industry, to provide water security for both families and farmers.



The LNP will establish a Queensland Dam Company based in regional Queensland to ensure these projects get underway, providing an investment vehicle for the Federal Government to fund dams in Queensland.

Further Information

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