

Friends, this is our toughest fight in the toughest of times.

Now, more than ever, Queensland needs a Labor Government.

Make no mistake ... our fight against the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression will be long and hard.

But my team is battle-ready ... and we have an unbeatable weapon.

It's the Queensland spirit.

The way we come together in times of trouble.

Challenge brings out our best.

We've seen it time and again ... whether the challenge be flood, fire, drought, or this shocking oil spill that's being cleaned from our beaches.

But bringing out the best needs leadership.

It needs strong, experienced leadership ... and a Government with the strength and vision to renew and reinvigorate.

So I seek from the people of Queensland in this election a mandate

- a mandate, to mobilise all our resources, all our experience and all our energies towards creating jobs
- a mandate, to build on the achievements of Labor in the tough times
- a mandate, for the most serious challenge of modern times.

Queensland needs a government with the courage to face the facts.

To admit the reality of the world crisis ... because unless we do that ... we can't even begin to work through it.

To be a Government for the good times ... but more importantly ... to lead us through the tough.

That's always been Labor's priority.

It's my priority ...

And it's my team's priority ...

Queensland needs a Government that supports the great Labor value of the fair go:

... one that understands its role in tough times

... one that's committed to working *with* the government of the Nation.

In times like this, Governments must lead and Governments must act.

Friends, this morning I shared time with a mine worker, Dustin and his wife Crystal.

They, along with their daughters Calli and Jessica are here with us today.

Dustin has worked most of his adult life in the mining industry.

He's driven trucks, loaders and dozers.

It's hard work ... but he loves it.

It's kept bread on his family's table.

But in February this year, Dustin was retrenched. He represents the human cost of the global recession.

Dustin's not alone. And as this economic storm continues, there are likely to be many more families feeling the brunt of the global financial crisis.

But we must never let the statistics deaden our senses to the fact that behind every one of those numbers, there are very real stories like Dustin's.

I gave Dustin and Crystal a commitment this morning:

... that I will fight with every fibre of my being for jobs and a return to prosperity.

And that is what sets us apart from our opponents.

In this election, Queenslanders have a stark choice: jobs or cuts.

That's the difference between us and them.

My highest priority is saving the jobs of today and creating the jobs of tomorrow.

Today I make this commitment to you and to the people of Queensland.

A Bligh Government will create 100 000 new jobs in the next term.

That's 100 000 new pay packets ... 100 000 new bread winners for 100 000 families.

And we'll do it in the face of the global recession.

We will work against the full force of the global financial crisis ... and emerge stronger, not weaker.

This is not the time to hang up our gloves and surrender.

It is time to fight ... to fight for jobs.

It is time for Governments to step up ... this task is too big and too important to leave to chance.

The number one priority of every single member of my Government will be to protect and create jobs.

In the last ten years - Queensland has outpaced the nation - with lower unemployment and higher economic growth.

When the critics said it couldn't be done, we got unemployment below 5%.

We've led the way ... we've stayed out in front ... and we plan to stay out in front.

And now, we set ourselves the challenge of 100 000 new jobs in the next term.

We will advance that plan on four main fronts:

First, we will keep Queensland's record building program going

We will push forward with the \$17 billion building program - the largest in the country - because it provides the capital works we need, and supports 119 000 jobs.

Almost \$7 billion in transport and roads alone ... more than a billion dollars in education.

... the same in health ... as we build and rebuild 10 major hospitals.

You can see it in action around this state ... all building a better Queensland.

This building program must continue ... it must continue to create a stronger Queensland.

And it must continue, to create more jobs.

Second, we will prepare for the recovery.

As we fight the global recession, we're already planning for the recovery.

The next step in our 100 000 jobs plan will be to expand our skills base so Queensland is ready to lead Australia into the next period of growth.

We will launch the biggest local expansion of skills and training ever - more than \$400 million to create almost 150 000 new training places.

We will increase payroll tax rebates for apprentices and trainees to 125% and ensure that apprentices and trainees are employed on every state and federally-funded project.

Our economy needs these young workers. They are building their skills as the frontline of tomorrow's economy.

The third plank of our jobs plan is to support new industries.

We will continue to support our traditional strengths like agriculture and mining.

And we must build on our existing strengths like tourism ... because, put simply ... in Queensland, tourism means jobs.

We'll invest \$38 million in new tourism initiatives ... it supports thousands of jobs and generates billions of dollar in our economy.

But many of the jobs we'll create will come from emerging industries, like Liquid Natural Gas.

Until recently, this industry, this job-generator, was not considered possible in Queensland.

Today we have six proposals from international firms clamouring to develop a whole new export industry here.

An LNG industry will create more than 6000 jobs in the construction phase alone ... and create jobs for the future.

Our future will be powered not just by new industries like LNG, but by new technologies.

My commitment to job creation will see us create 20 000 new generation green jobs by focussing on renewable energy.

Queensland has an abundance of potential and we're world leaders in clean coal technology.

But right now, we only generate 6% of our energy from renewable sources.

We can and we will do better.

We will set a new standard in combating climate change.

We will kick-start renewable energy projects and develop and export clean energy technologies to create new jobs.

Industries like solar and geothermal will power our future - and power job creation.

And finally, we will develop new job creation programs because friends ...

... we must face the fact that despite our best efforts, many Queenslanders will deal with the devastation of unemployment.

Now is the time when Governments need to step in to get people back into work.

To create jobs, not cut them.

New jobs programs like our Green Army.

\$57m over three years ... creating 3000 jobs ... putting an army of unemployed Queenslanders to work ... improving our waterways, beaches, National Parks and green spaces.

Friends, this is the plan we put before the people of Queensland.

Jobs not cuts.

My opponent thinks that slashing \$1 billion from the economy and axing 12 000 jobs every year is the way to go ... he denies the global recession even exists.

He's learnt nothing from the lessons of history and he's hopelessly out of step with Governments around the world.

I put this to you ... if you don't understand the problem, how can you begin to solve it?

To cut \$1 billion from the state budget destroys the services that families rely on and it destroys the jobs we need to preserve.

Every single commitment we have made is part of a clear, affordable, plan for Queensland's future.

Yes, these are tough times and we do need to be careful in our expenditure.

We will make every dollar go further and work harder.

... but I will not do it at the expense of jobs ... not at the expense of police, doctors, nurses and teachers;

... not at the expense of the people who back them up ... the people who clean our schools ... the admin officers at our police stations ... the IT workers who keep our medical equipment working;

... not at the expense of a single job

... I will not do it.

We will invest in services and we will invest in jobs.

And, yes, that means a deficit for now, but I would rather that any day than another person out of work and another family under stress.

It's the right path to protect jobs and the right path to a speedy recovery.

Jobs or cuts ... that's the choice.

Friends, every generation faces challenges that define its times.

The global financial crisis is definitely that ... but we can never forget the other great crisis affecting the planet ... climate change and our environment.

It's not a case of jobs versus the environment, as our opponents suggest.

We need to protect jobs and the environment.

We, in the Labor Party understand the two are so strongly connected ... they are global problems that demand local solutions.

I have set us the target to reduce Queenslanders' carbon footprint by a third by 2020.

And today I announce a major new initiative - a solar hot water plan to help reach that target to create jobs and save families money.

Over the next three years, we'll provide 200 000 solar systems to families at a fraction of the retail price of electric ones.

... this will more than double the number of solar hot water systems across the state

... and it will save the average family around \$300 a year on their power bill.

Our policy will deliver solar hot water to families that will pay for itself within two years - for pensioners it will be even quicker.

This is good for families ... good for jobs in the solar industry ... and good for the environment.

Friends, we need to mitigate and reverse where we can the effects of climate change and we need to protect the wonders of our natural environment.

Since becoming Premier I have committed to increasing the National Park estate to almost 13 million hectares ... or twice the size of Tasmania.

And today I take that agenda further.

A Labor Government will declare three of the great channel country rivers in south-west Queensland as Wild Rivers ... preserving some of the world's most beautiful areas for future generations.

We will boost carbon trading and protect vegetation by giving farmers the right to earn an income from trading carbon credits in the regrowth on leasehold properties.

And in the next four years we'll cut by half the level of dangerous pesticides and fertilisers running into our most precious treasure, our Great Barrier Reef.

We will also start the work on a new 2000 kilometre Cape York Great Walk in partnership with traditional owners.

My vision is for one of the longest and most spectacular walks in the world.

It will stretch from the Daintree River to the tip of Cape York and it will cross some of the most amazing country on earth.

This will be a huge international drawcard ... with the potential to create more than 1000 jobs in construction ... and inject millions into the local economy.

It is estimated that the walk could attract more than 20 000 tourists a year - that's more than the Overland and South Coast tracks in Tassie and the Kokoda Trail combined.

With every one of these steps, we create jobs and protect the environment.

Friends, a key challenge for Government will be improving services in these tough times when people will need them the most.

Times have changed dramatically, but our resolve to provide the services that Queenslanders need - to deliver teachers ... and nurses ... and doctors - has not.

Investing in education, investing in teachers is one of the best investments a government can make.

We need to give our best and brightest every incentive to pursue a career in teaching and build the skills of the workforce of tomorrow.

And we need to provide our teachers with the rewards, the resources and the back up to do this task.

We will employ more than 1000 teachers in the next three years.

And my Government will drive improvements in academic performance with \$72 million in new literacy and numeracy programs.

... and we'll build on our full year of prep to give more young children a flying start with 240 new Kindergartens.

When it comes to police, we are the Government that has lifted police numbers to meet national standards for the first time.

We will increase police numbers by at least 600 over the next three years.

And yes, this is less than my opponent has promised ... but I'm not in the business of making commitments I know I cannot keep ... or can only achieve by sacking workers.

And further, we will invest \$366 million in new and upgraded crime fighting facilities and equipment for our police.

We will employ at least 3500 doctors, nurses and allied health workers over the next three years.

And we'll keep building our health system to treat more patients than ever before.

We will expand our busiest emergency departments ... to free up beds ... and train 30 new nurse practitioners to treat patients sooner.

Our elective surgery times are the shortest in the country, but more needs to be done.

I have committed to delivering 20 000 more elective surgery operations.

Friends, when it comes to healthcare it starts with our children.

I want to make sure they get the very best start in life.

That's why today I announce that we will invest \$42 million to expand child and maternal health services in rural and regional Queensland.

This investment will ensure women can receive maternity support closer to home.

It means more parents can receive the advice they need in caring for a newborn.

Across our vast state, the ravages of cancer are known to far too many Queenslanders.

I will invest \$15 million in new patient accommodation for Queenslanders who need to travel to our cities to get the specialist treatment they need.

We will also deliver a new Oncology Centre at Rockhampton Hospital that will increase the hospital's capacity to treat cancer patients.

Friends, our young people with a disability deserve the best care a community can provide.

YoungCare - an organisation known to many of you - has harnessed the best of the Queensland spirit.

It offers dignity to young people who require care.

Today I am pleased to announce that we will contribute \$3 million to help YoungCare expand to the Gold Coast.

YoungCare was borne from new ideas to challenge an old problem.

It represents what can be achieved with a fresh set of eyes and a renewed focus.

Renewal and a renewed determination is the mark of a Government that listens.

As I stand before you ...

... as I seek a mandate to carry us forward and carry us through into the future, it is Labor that has always been the party of change

... change for the better.

We must continue to strive for change ... and renewal will be a hallmark of my Government.

Governments that keep evolving, that respond to challenges of the times meet their first obligation - their obligation to the future.

I know Queenslanders want us to do better.

And we will do better.

If elected, I will form a team that is committed to meeting Queenslanders' expectations ...

... to create jobs, to lift literacy and numeracy, to tackle our hospital waiting times and to protect the environment.

A Labor Government elected on March 21st will have many new faces, new ideas and a focussed determination to meet the challenges ahead.

It will build on our experience ... and harness new energy.

I will deploy the experience within our ranks to our areas of greatest challenge.

I will overhaul the Ministerial team that delivers the frontline services to Queenslanders.

Friends, 2009 will be a year to remember.

We'll remember it for the way Queenslanders faced the havoc of storms and floods in the north and north-west.

We'll remember it for the way we rallied around our southern friends in the tragedy of the Victorian fires.

We'll be forced to remember it for the impact of the global financial crisis.

And we'll remember it as the 150th birthday of our great state.

To be Premier of this State ... to be called upon to serve its people is an extraordinary honour.

To lead a Labor Government brings with it a serious responsibility.

Friends, Saturday's election will present Queenslanders with a clear choice:

A choice between jobs and cuts;

... between taking Queensland back or stepping forward;

... between pretending our challenges don't exist or facing them head on;

... between allowing the ravages of a global recession to weaken us or keeping Queensland strong.

... between the prospect of a minority Government made up of an unstable coalition, propped up by Independents and One Nation ... or a strong, stable, majority Labor Government.

My commitment as your Premier and that of my team is to face these times with honesty, energy and determination.

To work as hard as we can to build a better Queensland.

To secure the best for this great state.

To make it everything we love today ... and more.

... for Queenslanders like Dustin and his family ... who deserve a fair go

... for our future and for our children's future

... for the best of times, in the best of states, in the best of nations.

Queensland ... as we face our future ... you can count on me.