

[Opinion](#)

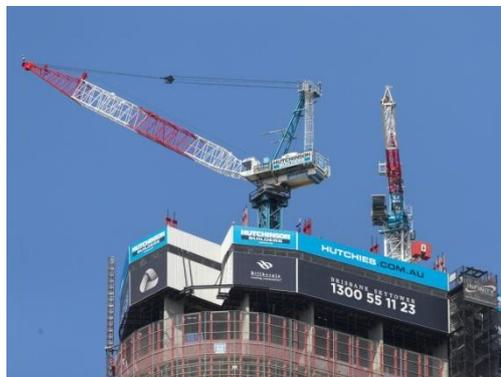
# Palaszczuk Government policy is holding up major investment

Steven Wardill, The Courier-Mail

October 26, 2018 12:00am

Subscriber only

ANNASTACIA Palaszczuk recently revealed how she spends time staring out the window of her lofty 1 William Street office counting airplanes.



“Some people used to have a crane radar,” the Queensland Premier insisted. “I have a plane radar.

“When I look out my window I see the constant stream of planes coming in and it is only going to get better and bigger in years to come.”

Ms Palaszczuk is probably right about the planes.

Brisbane Airport has seen patronage increase in recent years and that’s will grow exponentially when the second runway is completed in 2020.

[Palaszczuk’s catch-22 costing you millions](#)

[‘I’m going to work harder’](#)

However, there’s little wonder why the Premier has junked the old crane radar, the measure so famously deployed by her predecessor Joh Bjelke-Petersen when he commanded the top floor of the old Executive Building.

The official Crane Index - yes it’s actually a real thing - recently found that cranes had been disappearing from the Brisbane skyline at an extraordinary rate.

In mid-2016 there were 142 cranes erected across the Queensland capital and that [plummeted to 72 in the latest count](#).

Cranes are in short supply in Brisbane according to the latest index. Picture: AAP/Glenn Hunt

Compare that to Sydney’s 346 and Melbourne’s 158 and its clear Brisbane has hit a hump.

Cranes, of course, are only part of the infrastructure picture.

But it is indicative of the dearth in private and public sector construction currently occurring across Queensland.

A new report by the Infrastructure Association of Queensland has provided a telling insight into what stakeholders across the development space think is going on.

More than eight in 10 of those surveyed bemoaned red and green tape as an investment barrier.

Given these are developers, that result wasn't actually surprising.

What was remarkable was that three other areas were considered more problematic.

Topping their complaints was political instability.

Disputes between the State and Federal governments were seen as a significant barrier to investment along with the "high-risk of back-flipping on projects or key policy areas due to the pursuit of populist policies".

This was followed by a lack of investment opportunities because of the Palaszczuk Government's forlorn finances and opposition to asset sales.



And third was a lack of visibility over projects in the pipeline.

Premier Anastacia Palaszczuk's policies are blocking investment opportunities in Queensland, writes Steven Wardill. Picture: AAP/Darren England

No doubt, the Palaszczuk administration would blame the Federal Government for the first problem and protest about the other two propositions.

After all, they established Building Queensland to assess and prioritise major infrastructure proposals based on industry advice and the body now regularly produces reports on projects in the pipeline.

However, a glance at the first pipeline report produced by Building Queensland from June 2016 actually confirms every one of the industry's three major issues.

The pipeline is, to put it bluntly, prone to constipation.

The four projects deemed "ready for government investment consideration" in the authority's first report are a prime example.

Topping the list was the [\\$5.4 billion Cross River Rail](#).

The 10.2 kilometre rail link has been talked about for a decade and chopped and change between governments.

It was held up further because State's business case figures were a bit rubbery and the Federal Government's infrastructure arm insisted it wasn't a priority.

The State is now going it alone on Cross River Rail.

Construction starts on Brisbane's Cross River Rail project

This is precisely the political instability problem that the industry is warning about.

Next on the list was the \$340 million Yamanto interchange on the Cunningham Highway.

Business Queensland dusted off its business case which was completed four years earlier and plonked it in its report.

It has since been the subject of another bunfight between governments and was quietly shelved recently when someone realised the predicted capacity constraint it would resolve were based on development no longer occurring.

Next was the \$630 million European Train Control System, a project that will allow more rail services to travel safely on the tracks at peak times.

Capacity constraints, increasing demand, ageing signalling assets, higher operational costs and changing customer expectations were all given as reasons to get it done.

However, while the business case suggests it is a no-brainer, the bulk of the money hasn't been allocated until 2020 and beyond.

That's four years after the Government advertised for industry to submit expressions of interest in building the project.



The widening of the M1 between Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes is finally underway.  
Picture: David Clark

At least the final of the four projects deemed ready for investment – the widening of the Mudgeeraba to Varsity Lakes stretch of the M1 – is underway.

However, even this was subject to an unnecessary dispute over the funding split despite warnings that the route had an accident rate higher than any other highway in Queensland.

Numerous other examples of this go-slow approach to infrastructure are strewn throughout Building Queensland's pipeline reports.

Even the reports have been slowed down to yearly updates rather than every six months.

Much of this can be traced back to the Palaszczuk Government's lack of funds.

The Commonwealth's cherry-picking approach to infrastructure funding is also to blame.

But it all demonstrates how Queensland has gone from a place renowned for making things happen to risky prospect for would-be investors.

So it should come as no surprise that the premier no longer bothers to count cranes out her window.

### **ANY EXCUSE TO SHUT CABINET**

LUCKY State Cabinet ministers don't get paid in meeting fees, otherwise a few might be forced into rattling a tin along William St.

Cabinet didn't meet in its traditional Monday timeslot this week because royals Harry and Meghan were in town.



Obviously everyone must have had diary clashes – lunches, ribbon cutting and the like – as there was no rescheduled meetings.

Prince Harry and the Duchess of Sussex's visit meant Cabinet got a day off. Picture: Getty

It is not the first time Cabinet, the top decision-making body of government, has been pushed aside.

Meetings were cancelled during the Commonwealth Games so ministers could watch the events and glad-hand with visiting dignitaries.

### **SCOOT 'EM OVER HERE, THANKS**

THE e-scooter revolution has hit New Zealand.

San Francisco company Lime has put 1000 of the rentable two-wheelers on the streets of Auckland and Christchurch.

Another company will soon follow.



Kiwi transport authorities made rule changes to accommodate the zippy mode of transport, realising the potential to improve the tourism experience.

Electric scooter provider Lime is rolling out their rentable two-wheelers – and Steven Wardill believes Queensland should follow suit.

With the scooter companies eyeing southeast Queensland, will they get tangled in our notorious red tape?

Governments like to talk about improving public transport patronage and “last mile” solutions.

Imagine cruising from the city to South Bank on a summer’s day. Make it happen.

### **GRIN AND BEAR IT, POLITELY**

POLITICS is the art of the possible, they say, yet sometimes it throws up the damn improbable.

That was certainly the case at the Brisbane launch of trendy online art dealership “artmarketspace” at Central Plaza last night.



Former premier Campbell Newman. Picture: AAP/Lukas Coch  
Tourism Minister Kate Jones. Picture: Jerad Williams

The new business is being chaired by former premier Campbell Newman on behalf of co-founder Lee Steer.

Opening the event was Newman’s former nemesis in Ashgrove, Tourism Minister Kate Jones.

It was all good-natured guffaws as Newman introduced Jones, but it might have been a different story had it been Annastacia Palaszczuk instead.