



Speech by

Mr G. HEALY

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Hansard 29 April 1999

**QUEENSLAND FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY AMENDMENT REGULATION (No. 1) 1999
Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

Mr HEALY (Toowoomba North—NPA) (10.29 p.m.): I second the motion of disallowance moved by the shadow Minister for Emergency Services. I have to confess that being a member of the Opposition is becoming tedious, because on this side of the House we seem to be constantly fighting the very thing that, during the election campaign, the Premier promised that he would not do, which was to burden Queenslanders with new or increased taxes.

Mr Schwarten: Will you claim these words are your own?

Mr HEALY: I notice that the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing is not on the speaking list tonight, although he has been quite vocal by way of interjection. I suggest that he should place his name on the speaking list. He should get up and say something. I am interested in knowing whether the Minister for Public Works and Minister for Housing has got enough gumption to stand in this House and defend the increases in charges and taxes that have been part of this Labor Government as demonstrated in the three disallowance motions that have been moved tonight. If he wants to get on the speaking list, he should do so. Let us hear what he has to say.

The member for Nicklin has been sold an absolute pup. How well we remember the reasons that prompted the member for Nicklin to support the Labor Party, ensuring that it was able to form Government in this State. I have to say that if I was in the same position, with the Leader of the Labor Party promising certain things in a much publicised document, I probably would be swayed. The member for Nicklin must feel a right royal git. He has been sold out, used and spat out.

As I recall, the member for Nicklin agreed to support the Labor Party in securing Government because of a promise that there would be no increases in taxes and charges. Tonight before the House are three disallowance motions that are all about increases in taxes and charges. Only a few months after Labor secured Government in its own right following the Mulgrave by-election, the Labor Government said to the member for Nicklin, "Thank you, buddy. We sucked you in and we are going to spit you out. We do not need you any more. You are irrelevant."

Mr Schwarten: What an insult.

Mr HEALY: You're joking! I am nearly convinced that the member for Nicklin honestly believed that the Labor Party would be true to its word. I hope that the member for Nicklin has learnt a valuable lesson, which is to never, ever trust the Labor Party.

Here we go again: through this disallowance motion, the coalition is standing up for the very people whom the Premier ardently promised to support—ordinary Queenslanders. Despite that promise, the latest rise of 14.3% in the fire levy will impact across-the-board. There is not a Queenslanders whom this levy increase will not affect. Small and large businesses will be hit. Every Queensland land-holder will be whacked. Every church hall, every kindergarten and every school will be slugged. We know where most of those businesses and institutions will source the income to cover that additional cost: their clients, parishioners and students. Every single Queenslanders will be contributing, either directly, indirectly or both, to this additional levy that the Labor Party promised would never happen. They promised that to the member for Nicklin. They said, "We will not increase taxes and charges."

Mr Davidson What did he say when they did that?

Mr HEALY: The member for Nicklin said that he would support the Labor Government. He supported the Labor Government and now the chickens have come home to roost.

Accountability was another promise that the Premier made to the Queensland community. I would like to know how the Premier accounts for appointing a reputable and highly expert financial consultant to review the position of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority, quite possibly at a substantial cost to the community, and then completely ignores the recommendations of that experienced authority. In its comprehensive report, PricewaterhouseCoopers clearly identified that the current dire financial position of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority was a direct result of previous Labor Government mismanagement and its total disregard for the future of our emergency services by failing to maintain appliances and equipment.

The Goss Government's restructure of the old Queensland Fire Service created an amalgamated debt level of approximately \$57m. To date, the net repayment of these loans is \$43m.

Mrs Rose interjected.

Mr Schwarten interjected.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr HEALY: That is an exceptional achievement on paper but deplorable when one considers that it has been achieved at the expense of new equipment, new fire stations, additional staff and the implementation of effective business systems.

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Southport will cease interjecting. One of his colleagues is speaking. The member will show that colleague the courtesy of allowing him to speak.

Mr HEALY: The coalition Government recognises these aberrations. In 1997 we established the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority to provide the service with the basis for developing a long-term solution to long-term problems. Now we find that the Premier is not only ignoring the recommendations of his advisers by increasing the fire levy by 40%—

Mr Veivers interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Southport. He will cease interjecting. He will show his colleague some courtesy by allowing him to continue his speech. This is the member's final warning.

Mr LITTLEPROUD: I rise to a point of order. It is a matter of consistency. For the last 10 minutes, the member for Rockhampton has interjected—

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr DAVIDSON: I rise to a point of order. For half an hour the member for Rockhampton has sat in this Chamber and consistently interjected, and you did not pull him up or warn him once.

Mr SPEAKER: I did.

Mr DAVIDSON: We want some consistency during this debate.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a difference between somebody who is interjecting and somebody who is not only interjecting but also interrupting his own colleague's speech. In this House, as a matter of courtesy, when a colleague is speaking other members do not have a conversation across the Chamber. It is a disservice. If the member does not believe that that is the correct thing to do, he is allowed to dissent from my ruling.

Mr DAVIDSON: I do not dissent, but I ask you to be aware that the member for Rockhampton has sat in this Chamber for half an hour and interjected, and he was not brought to order once.

Mr SPEAKER: I am aware of that. I actually stopped the Minister. I told the Minister to cease interjecting. If the member for Noosa had listened to me, he would know that I stopped the Minister, just as I am saying to the member for Southport now—

Mr DAVIDSON: I rise to a point of order. I did not rise on a point of order in relation to the Minister; I rose in relation to the member for Rockhampton. He was not warned once for his consistent interjections.

Mr SPEAKER: He is not here. I have warned him twice. Clearly, too many people have had too much raspberry juice tonight. We are all hyped up.

Mr VEIVERS: I rise to a point of order. I take umbrage at what you have just said, Mr Speaker. I have not had any raspberry juice or anything else. I was taking umbrage at what the Minister was saying and I was interjecting very clearly. I take great umbrage and I ask that you withdraw those comments, Mr Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER: I am talking about everybody.

Mr VEIVERS: I would ask you to withdraw that comment, Mr Speaker. It was insulting to this particular member. It is untrue.

Mr DAVIDSON: I rise to a point of order.

Mr SPEAKER: The two members will resume their seats.

Mr VEIVERS: I beg your pardon, Mr Speaker, but you suggested that we had been having plenty of raspberry juice. I know what the implication of that is.

Mr SPEAKER: No, not at all. I am talking about people being hyped up on raspberry juice.

Mr VEIVERS: I take umbrage at that because I have not.

Mr SPEAKER: The member will resume his seat and allow his colleague to continue his speech.

Mr HEALY: I congratulate the former Minister for Emergency Services, the Honourable Mick Veivers, for the way that he administered that portfolio. I had a fair bit to do with the former Minister at that time. His contribution to the portfolio was absolutely exemplary. That contrasts with the way that the current Labor administration is handling the portfolio of Emergency Services. We find not only that the Premier is ignoring the recommendations of his advisers by increasing the fire levy by 14% but also that he has effectively strangled any chance that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Authority Board had of developing a strategy to manage that vital service into the 21st century. The State Government's decision to increase the urban fire levy by \$14 represents another broken promise by the Beattie Labor Government.

Time expired.
