



Speech by

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE**

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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Hansard 26 October 1999

### **PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENTS**

**Hon. R. E. BORBIDGE** (Surfers Paradise—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 a.m.): I rise today to speak about the corruption of due process in relation to senior Public Service appointments by the Beattie Labor Government. When in Opposition the Labor Party made much of its commitment to merit and equity and to ensuring that in Government it would uphold the principles of a traditional Westminster Public Service. Sadly, what we are witnessing is a Government that is undermining the core values of the Public Service and misusing public moneys in a wanton and baseless fashion.

It is with some concern that I bring to the attention of this Parliament and the community two high-profile examples of how Public Service appointments are being dealt with by this Government. In both cases the fingerprints of the Premier are all over the process and I believe that the honourable member has a lot of explaining to do.

Before outlining the facts, I want to make one or two points clear. People appointed to the senior ranks of the Public Service are paid a lot of money by taxpayers, and taxpayers want and expect value for money. They want value in performance and they expect and demand that people are paid a fair day's pay for a fair day's effort—no more, no less. They expect that if a job is worth a certain salary, the person holding that position will be paid that amount. Any fair-minded person also would appreciate that if a job is advertised as having a specified salary, the applicant will be paid the publicly disclosed salary. For many years our consumer and commercial laws have mandated truth in advertising and I am sure that these basic ethical considerations would be anticipated to be applied by the very Government that enforces these standards for the rest of the community.

The first appointment I bring to the attention of the House is that of Ms Helen Ringrose as Deputy Director-General, Government and Executive Services, Department of the Premier and Cabinet. This position fell vacant on the retirement earlier this year of Mr Eric Bigby, a longstanding and respected bureaucrat. The position was advertised in the Government Gazette as well as in newspapers, including the Courier-Mail. The advertisement that appeared in the Courier-Mail of 26 June states in part "total remuneration value \$122,906 to \$142,235 per annum (SES 3)". It is explained in the advertisement that the total remuneration value includes private use of a motor vehicle, employer superannuation contributions and a 17.5% leave loading. It was advertised as an SES3 position. In other words, the deputy director-general's job had been independently evaluated by Cullen, Egan and Dell as being worth no more and no less than that.

At the moment, the salary component of an SES3 ranges from \$100,612 at the bottom end to \$117,276 at the top of the scale. I am advised that this particular position was evaluated as an SES3 low, for which the maximum amount payable is around \$105,000. After this job was publicly advertised, a selection panel was convened and Ms Ringrose was nominated. She was then appointed by Executive Council on 29 July and the Director-General of the Premier's Department, Dr Davis, announced her appointment to staff. So far so good.

However, just a few short weeks later the appointment was revoked, but Ms Ringrose was appointed to the very same position under special contractual arrangements which are very unusual. In response to questioning at the Estimates committee the Premier confirmed this series of events and disclosed that this was to ensure that Ms Ringrose could be paid the same amount as she was receiving from the Brisbane City Council, her former employer. The Premier also disclosed that, instead

of an SES3 salary of up to \$117,276, her special contract provides that she will be paid \$140,000 salary, \$11,000 market allowance, a performance bonus of up to 15% of her salary and all other benefits as if she had been appointed as an SES3 officer. In short, she will be receiving a salary of up to \$55,000 more than all other public servants doing equivalent SES3 jobs in every other Government department. She will be receiving a total remuneration package worth \$193,000—a package almost the same as that of most directors-general. This is quite extraordinary.

First, I am not aware of any other Queensland public servant being paid a "market allowance", whatever that may be. Second, with the exception of some directors-general, I am aware of no other senior Queensland public servant who is being paid a salary bonus. To randomly select Ms Ringrose for special attention in this regard creates a precedent which I am sure other public servants will be most interested in. Third, Ms Ringrose's remuneration is equivalent to that of most chief executives. The Government parrots on about principles of relativity and equity in the industrial sphere, but this is a very odd arrangement.

Fourth, the deputy director-general's position was independently evaluated as being worth an SES3 pay level, yet the Government is now paying a person up to \$55,000 a year more than the position is evaluated to be worth. Finally, this position was advertised to the world as one that would be paid a salary of up to but not exceeding \$142,235, yet Ms Ringrose will be paid up to \$193,000. People either applied or did not apply based on the information that was disclosed. It is now clear that the information that was disclosed was misleading and incorrect.

Any fair-minded person would have no option but to conclude that the whole concept of an open, fair and accountable merit selection process was totally subverted. If the public were alerted that a successful applicant could have negotiated a special pay deal far in excess of what was advertised, who knows who may have applied. Serious questions arise as to why Ms Ringrose has received a special pay deal involving \$55,000 more than the job she is doing is worth. Likewise, serious questions arise as to why Ms Ringrose applied for this job in the first place when it was advertised at a certain pay scale if she did not intend to accept it at that pay scale.

Very serious ethical and industrial questions are at issue. The Premier has said that if this special deal were not struck, the State would not have got the services of Ms Ringrose; but the State did get those services. She applied for the job on a certain basis and was selected and appointed. In those circumstances, why was a special deal struck which puts her at an advantage over all other senior officers in the Public Service?

The second worrying appointment is that of Mr Barry Carbon, the Director-General of the Environmental Protection Agency. Mr Carbon had been acting in this job for around six months before it was advertised, without having gone through a merit selection process. The job was advertised in the press and the Gazette as being CEO2, which would have paid up to \$198,393 each year. Yet the Government Gazette of 9 July discloses that he was appointed not on a CEO2 pay scale but on a CEO3 scale, with a maximum remuneration package of \$227,391.

Here we have another example of a position evaluated as being worth a certain amount and advertised to the world as one for which the successful applicant would be paid that amount. Yet we see that the Government has subsequently rewarded the successful applicant with a pay deal far in excess of the advertised amount and in excess of what the position is worth. In this case, Mr Carbon can be paid almost \$30,000 per year more than the position was advertised for.

These are two examples of how this Government is operating, and it leaves much to be desired. It has struck one deal giving a person up to \$55,000 more than the job is worth and what it was advertised for. It has struck another deal giving a person a remuneration deal of around \$29,000 more than the job was publicly advertised for. Why? When will it end? What other special pay deals will be struck and just how far into the public coffers will this Government delve?

The Criminal Justice Commission has just completed an 18-month investigation into the circumstances in which the Fire Commissioner created a job and appointed a person. On the precedent set by the Criminal Justice Commission in regard to the circumstances relating to the Fire Commissioner, there is an obligation on the Criminal Justice Commission to investigate the rigged appointment of the Deputy Director-General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the rigged appointment of the Director-General of the Environmental Protection Agency. Due process has not been followed. Special deals have been done for special people.

Time expired.

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