



Speech by

Mr T. MALONE

MEMBER FOR MIRANI

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GOVERNMENT ELECTION PROMISES

Mr MALONE (Mirani—NPA) (6.35 p.m.): In the past few weeks we have seen the monumental dishonesty of the Beattie Labor Government exposed. We have also seen exposed the monumental disregard the Premier has for ordinary Queenslanders, who have been slugged with an increase in butchers' fees, an increase in compulsory third-party premiums and an increase in the fire levy. All these increases are well in excess of the inflation rate. They are also well in excess of the commitment given by the Premier that he would not increase taxes and charges beyond the inflation rate. That was not only the commitment he gave to all Queenslanders; it was the commitment he gave to the member for Nicklin when he was so desperate to form a minority Government. The Premier has presided over increases in butchers' fees of as much as 300%. The Premier also, during his term, has presided over the second hike in third-party premiums—this time by \$40. And the Premier has presided over a 14% increase in the State's fire levy.

On that issue—I was disappointed to hear on radio that the member for Nicklin had swallowed the Government's line that the increase in the fire levy was necessary because the fire trust fund was running into debt. I was disappointed to hear the member for Nicklin say that, because I can vividly recall the then Premier, Rob Borbidge, offering him all the resources of Treasury to cost both the coalition's and the Labor Party's election commitments. Instead of accepting a full and comprehensive Treasury briefing, the member for Nicklin chose to put his faith in the integrity of the Beattie Labor Government's ministerial press releases. Had the member for Nicklin instead chosen to accept the figures of Treasury—or, indeed, the Beattie Government's own Budget papers as opposed to its own press releases—he would have realised that the trust fund was not in debt at all. In fact, he would have realised that the trust fund had an \$18m surplus when it was left to the incoming Labor Government. But like all Labor Governments, the squandering has begun, and it cannot afford to meet the costs of inflated election promises.

When the Beattie Labor Government announced its rise in the fire levy, it claimed that the increase was necessary because a so-called independent report had been conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers which showed the fund was facing a debt. But where was that report? Where was the report which was completed well and truly before the Beattie Government handed down its first Budget? It was nowhere to be seen! The Minister refused to release it and, instead, chose to keep it under lock and key. When the Beattie Labor Government handed down its Budget, where was the mention of an increased fire levy? It was not mentioned, even though the alleged report had already been completed.

When the Estimates committee requested a copy of the so-called independent report into the Fire Service so that it could ensure the Government had properly budgeted for emergency services, where was that report? Again, the Minister refused to release the report. She even refused to release it despite a request from the all-party Estimates committee for a copy of the report. So much for open and accountable government! A report which had been funded by the taxpayers of Queensland into the Fire Service was deliberately hidden from the taxpayers of Queensland.

The actions of this Government represent the most dishonest and underhanded actions of any Government anywhere in Australia. The Labor Government has blown its Budget and it has blown its

credibility. Queenslanders are now having to fork out for this Government's economic bungling, which is already becoming apparent so early in its term.

The decision to increase the fire levy will not only impact on householders, it will also impact on small businesses, churches, schools, clubs, caravan parks, day-care centres and even hospitals. No-one escapes the hike in charges, and no-one escapes Labor's dishonesty. The average householder will cop an increase of 14% in their fire levy; non-profit clubs will also cop an increase of 14%; small hospitals will cop a similar increase; and so on.

The cost of living for almost every Queenslanders is getting higher by the day. The State Government has an obligation to all Queenslanders to honour its commitment to keep charges in line with the CPI. That was Mr Beattie's contract with Queenslanders, and it was his signed contract with the member for Nicklin. It is time that this State Parliament held the Premier accountable for his promises.
