



Speech by

Dr DAVID WATSON

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

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AMBULANCE LEVY

Dr WATSON (Moggill—Lib) (7.40 p.m.): When the Premier introduced his latest tax on Queenslanders, the new ambulance levy, he did his usual trick of trying to blame other people. He started off by saying there were 10,500 bludgers who had not paid a total of \$8.1 million in bills for the Ambulance Service they had used in the last year.

He also tried to shift the blame to the federal government by blaming a fall in subscriber numbers as more people took on health insurance. He indicated there is a \$30 million shortfall in the cost of providing the Ambulance Service. What he has not explained to the people of Queensland and the people of my electorate is why he had to slug Queenslanders a levy which is going to raise \$110 million. He has identified a couple of shortfalls: \$8.1 million, a total of \$30 million, but the question is why the \$110 million in extra taxes.

Everybody in my electorate is concerned about this issue. I have had more phone calls and letters and emails on this particular issue than any issue for a long period of time. I have time for only a couple of examples tonight. One lady who rang me reflects what I think is a fairly broadly held opinion in the community, and that is she does not object to paying for the ambulance but she already pays for the ambulance through her private health fund. This means that she and others like her will be slugged twice for the same service.

Another gentleman called me and sent me a more extensive email. He said this—

Further to my brief contact with your office today I confirm my concern at the apparent lack of consideration on the part of the Queensland Government in developing the 'latest' solution to the funding of the Ambulance Service. This is the second time they have indicated a scheme which will be surrounded by anomalies.

That is what runs through it: plenty of anomalies—

As far as I recall, my wife and I have subscribed as a family member to the Ambulance Service in the three states of Australia we have lived in since our wedding forty one years ago. If our membership of an Ambulance Service hasn't been for the full forty one years it has been very close to that period. Our principal residence for the last seventeen years has been in Brisbane and for all of that time we have subscribed to the Queensland Ambulance Service.

...

As I understand it, under the proposed arrangement, families in the same situation as ourselves—

And he owns another unit—

will now be required to make two subscriptions to the Queensland Ambulance Service. I believe there are a lot of similar anomalous situations such as families who also have a business premise. I am fully supportive of the concept that funding of this wonderful service is an important issue and it makes a lot of sense that the cost should be shared throughout the community. However, it seems a bit over the top that we who have stood up for so many years should now be slugged twice because there has been a large proportion of the community who have not accepted their responsibility.

Rather than continue to ignore the realities facing genuine subscribers in a petty and offhanded manner, I consider it is truly time that those in government put their thinking caps on and come up with a scheme that gives recognition to those who have done the right thing for years and is fair to all. If they can't, then they shouldn't be given the responsibility.

That I agree with.