



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 7 March 2006

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### MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.41 pm): 'Sometimes people's best interests come before politics'. This simple, effective and seemingly obvious line was uttered in this place this morning, Tuesday, 7 March, and serves as a simple reminder to all of us who have the privilege to sit in this place of our true purpose as elected representatives. Our purpose in this House is not to serve as political heavies or factional overlords; our true purpose does not require us to serve the media and provide them with well-spun, easily presented stories. In the end, our purpose does not even lie in serving the person sitting beside us who represents a different portion of this state. Our purpose is to strive for the simply put goal of accommodating the best interests of the portion of Queensland we represent.

Although, as I stated, this objective is stated very easily, the process through which this purpose is achieved is, in essence, the definition of politics. The party room contributions, the representations to other members and the challenge of navigating competing interests within communities, political parties and, indeed, within ourselves are all part of a puzzle that is pieced together to make the picture of politics. Because one is trying to see the noble and pure goal of serving our constituents with distinction through a looking glass dirtied by political dealings and processes, there are times when no matter what the originally intended destination, we can lose the point on the horizon we originally set course for.

The words 'Sometimes people's best interests come before politics' came from the mouth of Premier Peter Beattie in answering a question this morning. That was followed only minutes later by the Minister for Public Works, Housing and Racing saying that members on this side of the House 'live in a policy vacuum'. That statement made me think: on what basis does one judge the policy ideas of one's political opponents?

The vast majority of government-sponsored legislation goes through this place with the support of the opposition. Why? In part because this particular opposition looks primarily at the policy benefits of the legislation and then decides if and how it will support the bill. This is best practice for an opposition in a Westminster system because, if nothing else, it overcomes the effective criticism that a particular opposition is opposing government initiatives solely for opposition's sake.

The same cannot be said, though, for the government. Under the Beattie government there have been 67 private members' bills introduced by this side of the House. Only one of those bills has been passed. Does this mean that on 98.67 per cent of occasions the government has looked at a bill introduced by an opposition member or an independent and decided on substantial policy grounds that it should not be supported? No, of course not! I have introduced two of those bills, the Fluoridation of Public Water Supplies Amendment Bill 2004 and Racing (Race Fields) Amendment Bill 2006, and on both occasions the bills I introduced were Labor Party policy and/or supported by the relevant minister, but not supported in debate because they were introduced by an opposition member.

Maybe the government members should stop looking at which member introduced the bill and start looking at the content of the document in order to heed their leader's words, 'Sometimes people's best interests come before politics.'