



Speech by

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LOTTERIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (3.11 pm): It is my great pleasure to rise to speak to the Lotteries Amendment Bill 2007, and the Leader of the Liberal Party and the member for Robina have noted that we will support this bill. It is based on our belief that the government does not have to be involved in activities that can be best performed by private enterprise. That is a principle that we certainly adhere to and gambling is not necessarily an industry that governments need to be involved in. Having said that, our support comes about mainly because of the fact that the moneys are going to be used to fund a new children's hospital.

I want to point out here today that the Queensland coalition was at the forefront in advocating that last year. The Beattie Labor government had the temerity to come in here on 30 March last year and move a motion that it opposed the decision of the coalition that we would work towards establishing a paediatric hospital.

I go back because I note that in the second reading speech of the Deputy Premier there is absolutely no mention of the children's hospital and the fact that the funds from the sale of Golden Casket will go towards the construction of a paediatric hospital. That was stated in a press release of 16 April that is headed 'Casket jackpot for Queensland children'. The Deputy Premier mentioned that the new arrangement would release \$140 million to \$150 million in surplus cash currently held by Golden Casket back to government and that when added to the sale moneys of \$530 million there would be \$680 million to fund approximately \$700 million for the children's hospital. I will come back to the issue of why that money had to be found in a moment when we look at the details of that debate on 30 March 2006.

However, first we need to look at the genesis of the proposal for a stand-alone children's hospital and how that came about. It comes back to the failure by Queensland Health to be able to provide safe public hospital services. Last year the Labor government reviewed paediatric cardiac services with a number of eminent specialists and experts. They commissioned a report which recommended a Queensland Children's Hospital be established. As I say, the Premier came in here on 30 March during the Gaven by-election campaign and moved this motion and scaremongered in the debate on that motion that it would lead to the closure of paediatric services at Prince Charles, Royal Children's and Mater Children's Hospital. The Premier said on that day—

The coalition has made it absolutely clear what its policy is. It is in black and white. It is policy on the run but it is the coalition's policy nevertheless.

The health minister also had some comments to make. This is the crux of why this money has had to be found today. He said—

... I have already been on record saying that if we wanted to go down the path of a stand-alone hospital we probably would not get much change out of \$500 million.

As it turns out, it will be \$700 million. The health minister said at the time—

They are prepared to cop that, despite the fact that we have released a South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan for the infrastructure needs of south-east Queensland for how many years, Premier?

Mr Beattie: Twenty.

Mr ROBERTSON: The next 20 years. Where are they going to factor that in? What year is that hospital going to be built? If it is going to cost \$500 million, what year will they factor that in?

In other words, they had no plans to build it. So they did not have the money to be able to build it. But six months later in an election campaign when they needed to do anything to try to get re-elected they said, 'We will build a children's hospital.' The health minister also said that day—

So on top of the costs of a new hospital there are refurbishment costs in each of those three hospitals to bring them up to a standard that can be used for adult medicine. They have not factored that in, either.

There was clearly no expectation within the budget of the health minister at that time that he would have to plan for a stand-alone children's hospital. Yet six months later in an election campaign it was promised as 'policy on the run'—the very thing we were accused of in that debate on 30 March. Six months later it was good enough for the government to promise it would spend \$700 million and now it has to sell off the farm to find the money to do it. That is the crux of this debate: selling off the Golden Casket.

A government member interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: We are supporting the bill. If the member wants to interject he should do so from his correct seat. When the Leader of the Liberal Party was the shadow health minister he said on that same day—

The only way we are going to have world-class paediatric services in the future is through the provision of a dedicated hospital for that.

So there was never any doubt from this side of the House about whether we would be prepared to build a children's hospital. The answer was always that we accepted the recommendations of the experts that such a hospital was needed and we would commit to doing that should we be elected.

Of course at the end of that debate at 4.34 pm the Premier said—

We will not be supporting the ... creation of a dedicated Queensland Children's Hospital.

That is what he said in the *Hansard* on page 1,083 on 30 March 2005. Six months later he said, 'We will build a children's hospital. We will do it. We will say anything to get re-elected and now we have to sell off the farm to fund it.'

We have seen that last year the Beattie government attempted to conceal reports of the failings within the system with respect to paediatric cardiac services. It was unbelievable that the Premier would stand in this House and move a motion opposing a children's hospital that this bill is now seeking to fund.

This bill exposes the hypocrisy of the Beattie government. It exposes that this government is still unable to guarantee the necessary levels of funding to provide essential infrastructure without the need for the asset sales. Clearly, as the member for Robina said previously, the income stream that this government would have continued to receive would have amounted to many millions of dollars over the next number of years but that is now going to be lost due to a one-off sale. That is something about which the government should hang its head in shame. I seem to remember those opposite criticising the federal government for selling off Telstra. Now they are guilty of doing exactly the same thing. The government should hang its head in shame that it needs to sell assets to fund essential services. This should sound a warning to Queenslanders that more assets will need to be sold in the immediate future to fund the many other shortfalls and shortcomings of this government in the budget to be delivered next week when clearly it is desperately looking for whatever hollow logs it can raid.