



Speech by

## Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Tuesday, 22 May 2007

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### LOTTERIES AMENDMENT BILL

**Mr SPRINGBORG** (Southern Downs—NPA) (3.22 pm): The only way that we will be able to judge the success of what we are doing in this place today is in years to come to look back upon all the provisions that have been put in place. That is the way that I have tended to judge things that have occurred in this place over many years. We hear all of the policy contentions that are put forward by the government of the day to ensure certain protections, whether they be workers' entitlements or whether they be the protection of the beneficiaries or whoever the traditional client of a particular service is. Often, a number of years later when we sit back and look objectively at the arrangement, the things that the government said should be delivered were not necessarily delivered. The real and ultimate test in this case is how the carriage of the legislative provisions which will pass through this parliament today will be enacted, carried forward, regulated and overseen.

I heard the member who spoke before me say that, because the opposition members have some concern about the government's approach, they should oppose the bill. I disagree with the honourable member. Members can express concern in this place. Members can have a policy difference in this place. But that does not mean that members necessarily oppose the legislation holus-bolus. That is the understanding of this parliament. It is the job of members to express their concerns and debate the issues that really worry them. I agree with the points that were raised by the members for Robina, Surfers Paradise and Moggill. This is not necessarily the best way of funding a new children's hospital in Queensland. There are some risks involved in this process. We could be selling the people of Queensland short. Maybe there is a better way of doing this.

But, as I have seen the government's approach towards a new children's hospital in Queensland, it is quite apparent to me that this legislation is the only way we are going to get a new purpose-built paediatric hospital in Queensland. The government is not going to fund it any other way. That is the simple reality. I see opposite the Treasurer, the Inspector Clouseau of internet survey manipulation, sniggering as I put forward that particular contention. Last year, this very same person could not wait—she virtually broke a leg to tear across to the opposition side of the parliament to vote against a new specialist paediatric hospital in Queensland. We did not need one. We did not want one. It was going to be over the Premier's dead body.

As has been pointed out in this debate by the honourable members on this side of the House, the reason we need a new children's hospital is that at the moment what we have is dysfunctional, fragmented and is not serving well the children of Queensland. Last year an expert panel of paediatric specialists and clinicians and other experts said as much to the government. On that very day the opposition members said that we would support the proposition by that expert panel that there should be a new purpose-built paediatric hospital in Queensland. We said on day one that we would do that. We said that we would work through the details as that process continued, and further recommendations were made to the government of the day as we absolutely needed a new purpose-built paediatric hospital.

What did we see from the Deputy Premier, the Premier and the other members opposite? The most scurrilous and scandalous process of hysteria and scaremongering that one could ever come across. They whipped out there and said, 'This would mean that the Mater Children's Hospital would be closed. Something that has stood the children and families of Queensland in good stead for decades would be

closed down, would be torn asunder. What would this mean for the Prince Charles Hospital? What would this mean for the Royal Children's Hospital? We would be left in this wasteland, this never-never land somewhere out there.' We heard all of those sorts of things. At the time the opposition members said to the government, 'Be positive,' because this proposal was put forward by an expert panel.

The reason we need this hospital is clear. Over a period paediatric medicine has advanced quite significantly but, through fragmentation and a lack of specialisation, the specialist skills that are necessary to give our children in Queensland the best care that they need are not being delivered properly. It was properly pointed out by that committee of experts that there were children who did not receive the best of service and, as a consequence, who may have died.

It makes eminent sense to have a whole range of paediatric specialities in one place. There is no doubt about that. I also note that there will be other places that will specialise in specific areas of children's medicine, such as oncology. That is fair enough, as long as there is proper coordination and a proper speciality. But the reality is that, in this case, we should amalgamate all the specialities. That is all the opposition members ever proposed.

If the government thought that it was a good idea when it introduced this legislation as the precursor for the funding of this new hospital, then why did it not think that it was a good idea over 12 months ago when it was playing politics? What has changed, other than a process of political manipulation and opportunism? That is the only thing that has changed. If it was good policy 12 months or so ago, then the government should have said that 12 months or so ago, rather than playing politics at the time. That is what the government has done.

The reality is that this legislation is the only way this government, which is so financially mismanaging Queensland, can fund this new children's hospital. This government has dressed up something that should be a concern to the people of Queensland—the sale of an icon that has underpinned much of what we have been able to enjoy in Queensland because of the regular disbursement of funds back to the taxpayer. It has couched a highly supported policy position, the construction of a new specialist paediatric hospital, with the sale of the Golden Casket in Queensland. The government has taken those two contentions and put them together to make the sale of the Golden Casket fairly unarguable, even though it is not necessarily a totally honest process by which to fund a new specialist paediatric hospital in Queensland.

The government is doing this because it is fast running out of money. Members should keep in mind that last year the government came in here and said that we were going to have a modest budget surplus. However, since that time a whole range of infrastructure has had to be planned. That infrastructure is totally necessary for the provision of services to the people of Queensland, and particularly the people of south-east Queensland, but it will not cost just a few extra dollars a day; not even tens, hundreds or thousands of dollars a day. Over a period of just a few months, it will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. That has been the result of this knee-jerk approach to water infrastructure provisioning in south-east Queensland.

Something that in time could have cost \$1 billion or maybe \$2 billion will now cost \$9 billion, and that cost is increasing day after day after day after day. Is it any wonder that the government is going to have to sell the family silver in order to pay for good policy decisions for the people of Queensland, such as the new specialist pediatric hospital? If this government had applied a stitch in time with regards to water infrastructure, then we would not have had to spend \$9 billion. This government has turned a \$1 billion cost into \$9 billion and possibly even more.

Last year the government came into this place and said that we would have a modest \$1 billion surplus but that everything would be okay. Then it announced that although we have to find extra—indeed, multiple—billions of dollars, we do not have a structural problem in the budget and will not have to sell off the family silver in order to fund necessary good policy for the state of Queensland. I remind honourable members, particularly the new members to this place, that this has happened because the government did not properly fund and provide infrastructure in time. As a consequence of knee-jerk reactions, and particularly the panic with regards to water, the government has been forced into selling things off to provide a new specialist pediatric hospital.

Let me provide a history lesson for honourable members opposite. In 2003, 2004 and 2005, the opposition came into this place and said that we had an emerging water crisis in Queensland that would require some application of money, and that if that did not happen in the future it would cost very much more. Do members know what the government of the day said? In 2003 it said, 'We do not have an emerging water crisis. We see nothing but a perfect example of good water management in Queensland. There is no emerging water crisis.'

The very next year, as a part of our budget reply we came into this place and told the government that it would have to spend some money because we needed infrastructure such as dams, pipelines and desalination plants because we were facing a water crisis. The government said, 'This is a typical 1950s dinosaur approach from the opposition. You do not build dams and infrastructure anymore. You use water management.' The member for Algester would remember that; she was here. What do we have now?

Knee-jerk panic! The next year we raised the same issue. The government of the day told us, 'You don't build dams and infrastructure. They're blokes things.' That was said by the now Minister for Child Safety.

The government is now depriving the people of Queensland of assets—assets that return further assets—in order to fund by panic things that it should not have had to fund to this extent. That is what this is all about. It is good policy, although it has been couched in something that is not necessarily good policy. In most cases one would have to stand up in this place and say that it was unjustifiable but, frankly, we cannot pass up the opportunity to build a new specialist pediatric hospital in Queensland. That must be supported.

The coalition led the government on this issue by at least 12 months. It is a great pity that we had to do that and it shows the dearth of thinking on the other side. They were more interested in playing politics than formulating good policy. I caution the government: in the future it must ensure that it responds properly, and not politically as it did on the eve of the last Gaven by-election, and ensure that it provides the funding for infrastructure at the right time. The old adage of a stitch in time saves nine could have saved not only the government but also the people of Queensland untold future financial hardship, which is the consequence of the government's financial mismanagement and a lack of policy ideas in this state.