



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 12 February 2008

MOTION: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL GROWTH

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (1.14 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this motion, which I note other opposition members have called the 'state of the state' motion. In terms of looking at what politicians should be doing, it is important to have a vision. I think this government seems to be looking back with hindsight when it talks about growth. I take the point that was made by the member for Moggill, who said that the Electoral Commission reports show that Queensland experienced great growth in the 1980s, yet suddenly the government seems to be saying that great growth is happening now. I think that, in the past, there really has not been the vision that people expect of their politicians.

In this 'state of the state' debate, when we talk about what we are hoping to achieve in the future I think it is also important that we look at what we might have achieved over the past year or year and a half. On behalf of the coalition, as the opposition health spokesperson, I would like to say that the amendment to the Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act that banned ice pipes is something that we certainly welcomed and championed. Originally the amendment was rejected by the government, but that amendment has now been accepted. I understand that a review of the act is being undertaken. That is very important. It is important that, as has occurred in other states, we ban smoking in cars when there are children present. Currently we have legislation that says that people cannot smoke in a business car if there is more than one person present, but that legislation is not actually enforced. I encourage the government to amend that legislation for the safety of our children.

Following concerted efforts by the member for Currumbin and me, an independent review of the needle and syringe program has been announced by the minister. We welcome that. We also welcome the appointment of oncologists at the Gold Coast Hospital, because Gold Coast patients were having to travel to Brisbane to receive their cancer treatments. We also welcome something that the minister rejected originally because there was not a budget for it, and that is the new children's hospital. During the last election campaign and in debate in this House the minister had ruled that out, but now it is part of forward planning. Members of the opposition certainly welcome that.

I listened with interest to the Minister for Health speak about forward plans for health over the coming year. I did not hear the words 'Forster' and 'Davies' once. Yet I can tell members quite unabashedly and unequivocally that when I consider forward health planning I look at the Forster and Davies reviews to see what their recommendations were. We all know that the Forster and Davies reports recommended a focus on clinical services, not on the budget. Yet we hear the health minister saying that hopefully he will get some more money from the federal government. Of course, already the federal government has flagged that its budget will be tighter, not more generous.

The health minister also did not mention safe working hours for doctors. The minister referred to doctors back working in the system. The minister always trumpets massive increases in staff numbers, yet we do not see that massive increase reflected in the number of elective surgery procedures carried out. In July to September 2005, 28,230 elective surgery procedures were carried out. In the quarter just finished, 28,579 were carried out. So there is an inconsistency in terms of the increase in the number of staff and what they are actually doing. I share the concerns of other members of the Queensland community about that issue.

I note that in his contribution the health minister mentioned 12 priorities, the last of which was opening more beds. Queensland is only back to the number of beds that it had about 10 years ago. Changing the culture of Health is important. I keep getting emails from people at Queensland Health that always state, 'When raising this matter with the appropriate parties I appreciate you not revealing my name. Retaliation in Queensland Health is swift and severe. I am concerned that, in providing this information to you, there may be attempts by Queensland Health to identify me and punish me. Please contact me.' Forster and Davies identified changing the culture of Queensland Health as being very important.

The member for Gladstone referred to the government spending money on advertising telling us how well Queensland Health is doing. At the PA Hospital four spinal injury beds are closed, yet this government is spending \$350,000 on this advertising. There is a three-year waiting list for spinal injury beds at that hospital. The minister mentioned that prevention is better than a cure. I note that the annual performance report refers to maternity care. Certainly, we should help to prevent mothers of newborns suffering from depression, but only 45 per cent of those mothers are receiving advice about settling their babies. Surely, those mothers should be receiving that advice. Thirteen per cent of mothers did not receive advice about feeding their baby. A health department should be giving that advice. I will be working hard to make sure that such services are delivered.

I welcome the fluoridation debate back into this parliament, but I say to the government that fluoridation is one element of oral health care. Currently, we still spend more money than any other state, yet Queenslanders have the worst teeth in Australia. Whilst fluoridation will help kids in the future, it will not help those people who are on waiting lists that are up to seven years long now. I think that is a smoke-and-mirrors trick by the government.

Time expired.