



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

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### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.08 pm): I congratulate the member for Mulgrave on his first speech and also the member for Townsville. Mr Speaker, thank you for your courtesy in allowing me to speak in this debate relatively early. I am honoured to address the 53rd Queensland Parliament as the member for Surfers Paradise and the Leader of the Opposition. I also want to acknowledge in the public gallery the former member for Mulgrave, the honourable Warren Pitt, and his wife, Linda—a man who has the respect of both sides of this House and who was always very pleasant to deal with. I know he is very proud of his son today. I saw him yesterday and he looked considerably younger than he looked when he was here and he said he was feeling much better as well. So I welcome Warren and Linda.

I thank Her Excellency the Governor for her welcome yesterday to Government House when we presented you, Mr Speaker, to her. I take this opportunity to welcome all new members of parliament, particularly the new Liberal National Party members, who also had the privilege of meeting the Governor yesterday. Many remarked to me that it was a great experience, especially for their family members. Hopefully they will get to see Government House again in the future. Those are the sorts of great experiences that members in this place can have. We can meet the Governor and visit places that we have heard about since we were children. Sitting in this chamber for the first time is one of my most treasured memories. I offer all members my congratulations and best wishes as they embark on a truly unique career representing their local communities.

Mr Speaker, once again I offer my congratulations on your new appointment. As I said yesterday, I am confident that you will fulfil your duties with fairness and impartiality. I congratulate you on your first full day. Even though this morning I was caught out using the first person, I am very glad to hear that you will enforce that rule. I also offer my thanks to your gracious wife, Kate, who spoke to me yesterday at Government House.

This parliament will be one of the most challenging we have seen in our times. In this tough economic climate, the decisions we make in this House will determine not only the future of our great state but also the future of 4.3 million people who have chosen to build their lives and raise their families here in Queensland. As elected representatives, we are trustees of Queensland's future and it is a responsibility no-one should take lightly. Yesterday we witnessed one of the longstanding traditions of Westminster parliaments. I congratulate the convenors for a great day. I thank the Clerk of the Parliament and all the staff who made it a great day. I also thank the Clerk for inviting all parliamentary staff to the garden party. However, today the real work has begun.

The people of Queensland have entrusted the members opposite with steering Queensland through what the Premier quite rightly says is the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Queenslanders are understandably worried about their jobs and their families' futures. With unemployment tipped to reach seven per cent, now more than ever it is vital that the state government takes a responsible approach.

If Australian modern history has taught us anything, it is that Labor governments cannot be trusted to manage the economy. Their irresponsible spending programs significantly impacted on our domestic

economy long before the words 'global economic crisis' became buzzwords. Long-term Labor governments are the worst offenders. We all know that endless borrowing is unsustainable and I am sure that the Treasurer is realising that as he tries to write the budget.

In Victoria, it was a Labor government that presided over the collapse of Tricontinental, which threatened to bankrupt the State Bank of Victoria and cause mum and dad investors to lose millions. In South Australia, the state bank went bust at the hands of Labor, plunging the state into billions of dollars worth of debt. In Western Australia under successive Labor governments, bad economic management and rampant corruption have been par for the course. New South Wales is a case in point of what happens to long-term Labor governments: they start to rot. Here in Queensland we have seen more than two decades of Labor reign. Since 1989 non-Labor has held office for only two years. It is fair to say that the current political agenda has been shaped wholly by 20 years of Labor government. The health crisis, the water crisis, the child safety crisis, the energy crisis and now our own economic crisis are all results of the way the Beattie-Bligh government has mismanaged this state.

The Premier says that Queensland's dire financial outlook is not of Queensland's making. Whilst the Premier can conveniently justify the state's finances through the prism of an unstable globalised economy, the fact is the government was grossly unprepared. The Bligh government left the Queensland economy exposed with huge spending and borrowing.

When the first indications of the domestic impact of a global slowdown started surfacing, Labor was still spending as if it had a licence to print money. In 2007, when the honourable Premier was the Treasurer, Queensland's revenue grew by 9.51 per cent, yet spending increased by well over 14 per cent. For the past three years Queensland's spending rate has outstripped our revenue income rate. We would not do it in our households; why do we do it with our state economy?

In 2008 we finally saw the crunch: our income stopped growing, but our expenses continued to grow at around the same rate. In 2008, when revenue growth went backwards, the Bligh government's expenditure was increased by over nine per cent. If Queenslanders ran their household budgets in the same manner, we would see the same crisis in housing as we have seen in the United States.

Irresponsible management in uncertain times has left Queensland's economy vulnerable to the pressure of the world market. Their irresponsible management practices have plunged our budget \$1.573 billion into deficit in 2008-09 which will increase to \$3.2 billion next financial year. Our children will be left to shoulder the cost of this government's appalling management of our economy. A baby born in Queensland this morning has come into the world with \$13,000 worth of debt hanging over his or her head. By 2011-12, when the state is \$74 billion in debt, every man, woman and child will represent a \$16,000 liability for the government.

At the start of this parliament the Premier vowed to work hard to return Queensland to prosperity, but we have heard this before. In fact, on 10 October 2006 at the opening of the 52nd Parliament, the government said that enhancing the welfare and prosperity of the people and the state of Queensland was at the core of its program. They outlined projects in water management, health and medical research, and education and training that would improve service delivery, keep the economy growing and keep unemployment down. But what have they really achieved?

Let us look at water management. The Gold Coast desalination plant, one of the key projects of the South-East Queensland water grid, is rusting. The Bligh government promised that by January this year 125 megalitres would be pumping through the pipeline every day. That project was taken off the Gold Coast City Council and expenditure has blown out to over \$1.2 billion, yet last week we saw supply grind to a halt while the Premier and her natural resources minister played politics with water restrictions. The \$1.2 billion public asset that the Premier promised would solve Queensland's water woes lies idle, rusting and not producing one extra drop of water.

The Traveston Dam has become a political enigma. The government railroaded residents by ignoring their requests to know the location of the dam. When the Premier needed to boost her green credentials going into the election, the project was suddenly on hold and under threat. Now it is back on the agenda. The people of Traveston Crossing want answers. They want leadership. The honourable member for Gympie and his constituents want answers. The Premier says the water grid is now in place and delivering water across the region, but desal has dried up. We are not really sure what is happening with Traveston because the story changes so often. I know that the member for Gympie and his constituents need certainty on this issue.

Let us look at health. When parliament rose after the 2004 election, the Premier claimed to have delivered Australia's most efficient public hospital system with the shortest waiting times for elective surgery. Obviously that was before the Bundaberg tragedy, the Forster Health Systems Review and the Davies Queensland Public Hospitals Commission of Inquiry. Since then we have seen nurses isolated, endangered and ignored in remote communities. We have seen more blow-outs in waiting lists, more bed-

block, ambulance ramping and bureaucratic meddling in hospitals. The Bligh government has failed to restore confidence in Queensland's public health system.

In 2008-09 the Queensland Health budget grew to \$8.352 billion, which was an increase of 16.8 per cent on the 2007-08 budget, yet Labor's recurrent expenditure per person, weighted population, in Queensland is less than any other Australian state or territory. Today there are about 35,000 sick people waiting for necessary surgery. There are probably a further 160,000 people waiting for a specialist medical appointment to find out if their illness is life threatening. Sadly, some of these people will wait several years just to get that specialist appointment. As the shadow minister for health points out, they are on a waiting list to get an appointment.

Unmitigated cumulative demand on health services from population growth, especially an ageing population and an increasing healthcare burden resulting from chronic diseases, poses a significant threat to the sustainability of our public health system. More public hospitals and expanded clinical capacity in existing hospitals, with more real public hospital beds, must be delivered in the smartest, fastest and most cost-effective way.

When it comes to education, we have a government that would rather close down schools than provide adequate resources to ensure every child has a pencil and paper. In 2006, at the opening of the new parliament, the government promised to 'raise standards through the new literacy framework, and provide specialised support for primary school students who need help to meet national standards'. The recent NAPLAN results, which showed that our children are either last or second last compared to others in the country, suggest that it is the Premier's government that needs help meeting national standards.

Literacy and numeracy are fundamental skills that our children need in the early years of education. They are not optional extras. This government has abandoned basic education principles which puts the education and future employment prospects of an entire generation in danger. Our schools need more teachers, more support and more resources. We need full-time teacher aides in prep classrooms so that every child receives the attention and help they need, particularly in the formative years.

And now we see the new agenda, outlined by Her Excellency the Governor yesterday—it is jobs, jobs, jobs. The Premier has promised to create 100,000 jobs in the next three years. She promised Queenslanders we could trust her to get on with the job of job creation. But the Treasurer has come clean on the Premier's job promise. According to the Treasurer's comments in the *Courier-Mail* on 11-12 April, the Easter weekend, not one of the 100,000 jobs promised will be delivered this year. More than 20,000 Queenslanders have lost their job since December. Saving jobs is obviously not a priority for this Premier's government. If it were, she would be working around the clock—as she promised—to create 100,000 new, full-time jobs to help the casualties of the economic crisis.

In these uncertain times, Queenslanders need to be reassured that their government has got its priorities right and is focused on the task at hand. For 20 years this government has had the wrong priorities, and Queenslanders are now paying for those mistakes. The Liberal National Party has its priorities right. We are privileged to have a talented, hardworking team who will provide a strong opposition to keep the Bligh government honest.

We have been fortunate to welcome some new Liberal National Party colleagues to parliament—ordinary Queenslanders who want a better Queensland. The new members in our ranks represent a cross-section of the community—we have small business men and women, professionals, former civic leaders, mums and dads. In our party room we have a good, healthy mix of age and experience. We will use this talent to move forward and deliver Queenslanders a strong, positive opposition to the 11-year-old Labor government. This is a government which is big on spin and targets but does little to deliver on promises.

To the people of Queensland, I urge them not to judge the Bligh government by what it says but to judge it by what it does. The Premier loves talking about targets but her track record in achieving them is poor. Whether they be targets for grade 12 retention rates when she was the minister for education or guaranteeing that no-one in Queensland would be worse off after the electricity deregulation, the Premier moves on to other targets. I have seen this in my own electorate with rapid transit. The Gold Coast light rail system was supposed to commence construction this year. Yet, as predicted, the project has been delayed. Now it may be off the agenda all together, despite the Treasurer's assurances in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* last year that rapid transit will be built in spite of the global financial crisis.

On 21 March, the people of Queensland said that they wanted a better government. By delivering us 11 new MPs, voters said that the LNP is heading in the right direction. But we acknowledge that we need to do more. We have heard the people of Queensland. The task now is to earn their trust and confidence. I will work relentlessly, along with my team, to show Queenslanders we are a credible alternative government. Under my leadership, the LNP will put forward fresh ideas and new policies to deliver the change Queenslanders want. We will work hard to hold the Bligh government to account and to ensure that it delivers on its promise to create 100,000 new full-time jobs over the next three years.

To many people in our community, politics today has become less about ideology and more about managerialism. Who will manage the state health system better? Who will manage our public schools better? Who will manage the economy better? Who will plan and build for the future and actually deliver the services but do it responsibly? I do believe it comes down to ideology, and our ideology on this side is that small business and the private sector will build economies in difficult times far better than large bureaucracies. I am confident that in three years time the people of Queensland will see the LNP as better managers than the members opposite. I thank my colleagues for the opportunity to lead the LNP forward into the future.

Turning to my electorate, I would like to thank the people of Surfers Paradise for returning me to this House to represent them. It was an election conducted in good humour. My opponent Caleb Rook is a young man who has an identical twin which was a bit confusing on polling day when I saw him at more than one booth.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** I did see him. One had bigger gaps in his teeth than the other, so that is how I was able to recognise him. He certainly did work hard. As I say, the election was conducted in a good natured way.

I want to thank many people in my electorate—my constituents and of course the volunteers who helped. It was a great honour to have the confidence of my constituents. I will continue to work hard to deliver results and to provide the best representation for my electorate on issues such as rapid transit, some certainty for the Gold Coast Hospital and of course the old perennial on the Gold Coast—police numbers in an area where we have such an influx of tourists and visitors. We also have real issues with tourism on the Gold Coast at the moment. Small business operators in tourism really are finding it very tough at the moment. I acknowledge that and I will work hard to represent them. I realise that without being the local member, the member for Surfers Paradise, I would not be here at all, and I guarantee to the electorate that I will never forget that.

I also want to thank my staff, campaign team and supporters, and my wife, Stacey, and my three children, who are my No. 1 supporters. The reason I want to lead the Liberal National Party is that I want to create a better future for my family and for all Queenslanders by providing the services that all Queenslanders expect and deserve without a debt that would be carried on for generations for our children and grandchildren to repay. With the support of my family, my Liberal National Party colleagues and our supporters, I am confident we can achieve a better Queensland.