



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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### **BLIGH GOVERNMENT, SERVICE DELIVERY**

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.41 am): In the second parliamentary sitting week after the election of 21 March we are here discussing the very things that state governments are all about—that is, service delivery in all of the important areas. The LNP believes in delivering services in the areas of electricity, water, health and education. Minister after minister has stood up here and acknowledged their failures and said that they have to do better. The Premier is saying that the government will have to set some new targets and plans. However, service delivery is the problem with this government, and we see it in every area that government members speak about. Let us look at what was discussed here this morning. The Premier talked about jobs and this jobs target clearly when we identified in the first parliamentary sitting week the fact that the 100,000 jobs promised were going to be for as little as one hour a week. With regard to the Premier talking about her absolute commitment to creating these 100,000 jobs, let us look at the statistics. Last month there were 114,000 unemployed Queenslanders; in the same month last year there were 83,000 unemployed Queenslanders. There have been 8,000 unemployed Queenslanders added to the unemployment list since the election. Clearly, the Premier comes in here and says anything and talks about targets and plans, as she has always done in all of her portfolios, but service delivery is what really counts for the people of Queensland and their children. Obviously the Premier just comes in here and says anything.

This morning we even had the Treasurer in here talking about last week's federal budget in that it has plans and statistics that show that the unemployment rate over the next two years federally is going to go to eight per cent or 8.5 per cent. The Treasurer acknowledged that fact, yet we still have the Premier talking about creating these 100,000 jobs and jobs in a Green Army, which we welcome, but we have to remember that these are jobs which could be paying only a couple of hundred dollars a week; they are not real bread-winning jobs. When it comes to delivering, that is the thing that this government is short on. We expect 100,000 full-time, bread-winning jobs, and of course we knew that had to be a nebulous promise when the unemployment rate was 106,000 at the time of the election. This government just says anything to get elected, and all we get from it is promises and then bungles when we actually come into this place and ask it specific questions.

We just heard the health minister denying any responsibility for issues of workplace health and safety in a nursing home at Dalby. It took the local member to provide the information to the health minister, yet the health minister is in here denying that it is his job to make sure that those sorts of things do not happen when it is a basic service for the people in that area. No-one should be attacked by rodents and they should not be told that they are not allowed to mow the field next door. The member for Condamine had to point this out to the minister, yet the health minister came in here and said, 'Oh, it's not really my job. Someone else is supposed to be doing it.'

Since we were here last we heard about electricity—another basic human service in 2009. There is going to be a 30 per cent increase in the cost from a government and a Premier who said that no Queenslanders would be any worse off after electricity deregulation. Of course we know that the Electricity Act says that the minister can set the price but can also give it the Queensland Competition Authority, which is what he has done, and of course we have seen the bungle that has happened in electricity where

Queenslanders are not going to be able to afford to pay for their electricity bill on top of all of the other costs that they are bearing. Once again from this government we hear platitudes and it tells people to look around for the best price when it is clear that there is no choice. There is no choice, and Queenslanders have to bear these costs.

The fuel tax is another issue that we now see the government flagging as a possibility, because clearly the budget is broken. We know that the government has gone from an \$800 million surplus to now having a \$1.6 billion deficit in this year, heading to a \$3.2 billion deficit in 2009-10. We look forward to hearing what the Treasurer has to say on 16 June, and of course today we have heard about the bungle in water. It has been bungle after bungle since the state government took control of our water supplies. It said that it was too confusing with councils in control, but let us have a look at the incidents we have had. We have the desalination plant at Tugun that is not working properly and that is rusty. There have been recycled water spills at Bundamba. I am the first to acknowledge that I am a supporter of having fluoride in our water, but it was always with a proviso that the administration—the mechanism of making sure we put fluoride in the water—would be done appropriately, and there is no excuse for poisoning the people of Queensland in certain communities with up to 30 times the dose. I can tell members that even as a dentist I would not want to be taking 30 times the dose of fluoride. No-one would advocate that, and that is a condemnation of this government in that it has not been able to ensure that the mechanism was done properly. Thirty times is just unforgivable and begs the question of just how this government is going to manage recycled water.

And of course today we had the Minister for Education standing in for the Minister for Natural Resources saying that they had located the water main at Anstead. This water main bursting nearly washed away an electricity substation. So it was really difficult to find—a geyser spurting up into the air! It begs the question of just how this government is able to deliver services. Providing water is one of the most fundamental services, and this government cannot even get that right. This is Queensland in 2009; it is not a Third World country. We should be able to expect to have water to drink and that our children can go to school, and of course that is something else that is happening today—a teachers strike. The Minister for Education did not know whether he was Arthur or Martha on this issue, saying that teacher aides were going to be supervising, saying that principals would be supervising. When asked today, he was unable to identify exactly the number of supervisors who would be there. There have been conflicting messages from the minister and the unions. There were ads in the *Courier-Mail* on Monday, 18 May from the Queensland government saying that people should keep their children home from state schools. But of course earlier in the week the Minister for Education was saying that parents could send their children to school because they would be supervised. There was another ad from the Queensland Teachers Union saying that the education minister claims that all schools will be open and all students can be supervised. The QTU knows that this is not possible. Our children in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 are second last or last in the country according to the NAPLAN tests, the literacy and numeracy tests. Teachers have had to muck around with the curriculum all year because the focus has been on doing these tests to prepare our children, and we want our children to do better. We want our children to do better compared to the rest of the country.

Our children should never be coming last or second last in any field of endeavour. But the teachers could not teach what they usually want to teach because they have to focus on these tests. The Premier also said that teachers may have to sit a test to prove that they have literacy and numeracy skills and endorsed Geoff Masters's recommendation, which I believe was misinterpreted. If you go to university for three or four years and you are not literate and numerate, there is no way that you should be able to be a teacher, anyway. Someone should have found that out during their university course. I do not believe that there is a test that these teachers should be able to do that can give them a tick and suddenly they are able to be a teacher. That just shows that this government is short on substance and just grabs at anything that it thinks will be the issue in the paper today or tomorrow.

I can understand the frustration of teachers. During the last election campaign we promised teachers a pay rise. I promised that as the shadow minister for education. The government refused to address the issue. We knew that the enterprise bargaining agreement was coming to an end. We do not believe that our teachers should be the lowest paid in Australia, but the government cannot even work out whether teachers are the highest paid or the lowest paid. That shows it has no idea. Instead of that proposal as an alternative, we have the government trying to change the issue and talking about bringing in a new tax for Queenslanders.

The Liberal National Party has never brought this tax on Queenslanders. Every other state of Australia had a fuel tax and in 1997 Rob Borbidge, the former Premier, made sure that we did not get that tax in Queensland. In yesterday's paper it is reported that the Premier would not give any firm commitments on taxes, saying only that she is seeking to avoid raising taxes in the June budget. Yet we have had the Treasurer committed to not increasing taxes. On 11 March 2009 at a media conference he was asked if he could rule out any increases in taxes and he stated—

I'm happy to rule it out.

We also had the Treasurer saying—

Make no mistake about it: we'll be delivering a fuel subsidy scheme. It will stay in place.

But now we know they are considering a new tax. This is an outrage that the people of Queensland cannot accept. In health, in education, in roads, in police, this government cannot deliver. Do not listen to what they say; look at what they do.