



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 4 August 2009

LABOR GOVERNMENTS, ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.36 am): I quote—

Democracy can only survive when ordinary men and women have faith in the integrity of those whose responsibility is the preservation of the integrity of Parliament and all its workings and ... the integrity of the executive government.

That is a quote from Justice Lee when sentencing former New South Wales prisons minister Rex Jackson to 10 years imprisonment for corruption.

Last week Tony Fitzgerald exposed a culture of corruption and cronyism in this long-term Labor government. He stated—

Access can now be purchased, patronage is dispensed, mates and supporters are appointed and retired politicians exploit their—
political—

connections to obtain 'success fees' for deals between business and government ...

That was Tony Fitzgerald on 29 July—last week—echoing the concerns of the Crime and Misconduct Commissioner, Robert Needham, echoing the concerns of the Integrity Commissioner, Gary Crooke QC, echoing the concerns of the Queensland Public Sector Union and echoing the concerns of Terry O'Gorman. Numerous people are saying there are concerns about what has happened in this state.

It is time for a royal commission into Labor's dodgy decision making, backdoor deals and secret bribes. There is no better example of that than when the Premier came in here this morning, and in answer to a question from the Leader of Opposition Business about contacts the government has had with lobbyists and about changes to the areas added to the urban footprint of which there have been 40 and potentially millions of dollars for developers, all the Premier could talk about were lobbyists with whom she had met who had had no success. But what we need to hear about are the lobbyists who have had success. After 12 years of this government essential services and public standards are clearly being eroded and slipping backwards. Like all long-term Labor governments, Labor members treat government as their play thing. They hand out jobs and secret deals for Labor mates and cronies. This government is rotten to the core. It is crisis consumed by corruption and cronyism, and we see no better example than the Premier's attempt to divert attention from their problems over the last couple of days. We have failures and illegal behaviour, deals for mates and a culture of secrecy.

Last month a former Labor minister was sent to jail for corruption crimes. Gordon Nuttall's conviction cast a pall over the integrity of every decision made by cabinet between 22 February 2001 and 7 December 2005 when he was a minister of the Crown. Again this morning we have sought details of some of those matters that should be made public. They are not before the courts. They are things that should be revealed so we can see the extent of this government's involvement and cover-up of things that he may have been involved in.

This Premier sat around the cabinet table with Gordon Nuttall, endorsing his dodgy decision making and immoral and illegal dealings. These decisions included the location of the Sunshine Coast regional hospital at Sippy Downs, the decision to give Jayant Patel a first-class ticket to leave Queensland and the

decision to deem overseas trained doctors as specialists. Hundreds of decisions by this long-term Labor government are potentially tainted by a corrupt Labor minister who has been thrown in jail for his crimes. The people of Queensland can have no faith in the decisions of cabinet until there is a full, open and transparent investigation.

In this state two-thirds of Queenslanders believe that they cannot trust the Premier, they do not like the way she is managing the economy and believe that she is leading to more problems in that regard, they believe that corruption is rife in this government and, most importantly, they do not think that she can fix it. Why is this? Because you cannot get an ambulance in this state, but a Labor mate can get a \$1 million success fee; you cannot get a hospital bed, but a Labor mate can get cash for opening a minister's door; we cannot get roads built or fixed, but a minister can get cash from big business. Sixty-five per cent of people believe that corruption is widespread and all the Premier says is that her ministers will be stopped from going to fundraisers with business.

During the election campaign we said that an LNP government would legislate against success fees. Last week the Premier said that she did not think that would be successful. Now she has jumped on board and says that she wants to do that as well, as with cash for access. It is a typical reactive solution from the Premier. She has never been proactive. There are corruption allegations involving contracts and rezonings and jobs for mates. We need a royal commission.

Now serious allegations are being made against former Labor minister Terry Mackenroth, former Labor minister Jim Elder and, of course, Trevor Rowe. Labor has made an art of shirking the raft of reforms implemented following the Fitzgerald inquiry of the 1980s. If one looked at what has happened with the new elements injected into the public forum by this Labor government, one would think that, if he were reporting now, Tony Fitzgerald would make rulings about success fees and cash for access. I am sure that if Tony Fitzgerald were reporting now he would say that this government has circumvented his recommendations and found out other ways to do dodgy deals, and he would definitely recommend against them.

For the past 11 years the Premier and her cronies have denied Queenslanders a fair, open and accountable government. Reams of public information have been wheeled through cabinet to abuse and evade freedom of information laws, which was another point highlighted by many people including Tony Fitzgerald. Political donations to the Labor Party are brought through the unions and companies like Labor Holdings and Labor Resources, which were set up to circumvent rules of disclosure. Yesterday I said that if we are going to have a discussion about this I am happy to work in a bipartisan way with the Premier to make sure that we sort out the perceptions of cash for access and cash for contact, as long as the Premier says, 'Let's consider what the unions are doing,' and as long as the Premier says, 'We'll stop taking money from the unions.'

Appointments made to government jobs and boards go to Labor mates. Those mateships are made over chequebooks and cash-for-access meetings. Former ministers lobby their friends in government for favourable decisions. Their friends in government lobby businesses for jobs for former ministers. Those who do not play the game—and last week we heard allegations from developer David Marriner involving the payment of success fees and employing Merri Rose—find the door to business in Queensland slammed shut. Those allegations need to be investigated if we are going to have any confidence in this Labor government.

A groundswell of support is gathering for a royal commission into the corruption inherent within the Labor Party. Last week Queensland's Chief Justice, Paul de Jersey, exposed the many opportunities in government for dealings that at best are immoral and at worst are illegal. As I have said, a number of voices have expressed concern including the CMC, the Integrity Commissioner, Tony Fitzgerald, Wayne Goss, the public sector unions and, of course, a young Indigenous woman.

Last week on the ABC program Q&A, former Young Australian of the Year Tania Major threw her support behind the LNP's call for a royal commission into corruption in Queensland. She has asked that any inquiry set up to investigate the government include an investigation into the controversial wild rivers laws that have destroyed businesses and jobs in Indigenous communities in Cape York. What did the Premier say on that show? She said that she thought it would be naive of people to think there may not be some corruption either in a police service or within government. That shows the standards of this Premier. She thinks it is naive to expect that governments be above any sort of corruption. I share the concerns of this former Young Australian of the Year who said, 'Dodgy government backdoor deals; that is the way business is being done in Queensland.'

If the Bligh government is serious about stamping out corruption and restoring integrity to government, the Premier will establish a royal commission into corruption in Queensland. To quote the Queensland Integrity Commissioner, perception is reality. The reality of the Bligh government is an insidious mix of dodgy deals, secret success payments, corruption and cronyism. Now what do we have? We have the Treasurer holding backdoor meetings to talk about the Premier's leadership, as has the Deputy Premier. That is what the Premier has to deal with now. Leadership speculation on her side—

Mr FRASER: I rise to a point of order. The statements by the Leader of the Opposition are patently untrue and they should be withdrawn.

Mr LANGBROEK: 'Untrue' is not a personal reflection.

Mr FRASER: I take offence at the behaviour implied by the Leader of the Opposition and I ask him to withdraw. I know he finds it a great challenge to work out what is or is not dishonest.

Mr LANGBROEK: I withdraw. The reality of the Bligh government is an insidious mix of dodgy deals. We need an investigation into the tainted decision making that took place when Gordon Nuttall sat at the cabinet table. We need an investigation into the connections between staff members of the government, lobbyists, former ministers and appointees to government boards. We need an investigation into the very serious allegations that people who want to do business in Queensland must hire lobbyists to get a fair hearing from the government. We need an investigation into the links between former deputy leader of the ALP Terry Mackenroth and companies that have received favourable decisions from the government. Justice Lee said—

Democracy can only survive when ordinary men and women have faith in the integrity of those whose responsibility is the preservation of the integrity of Parliament and all its workings and ... the integrity of the executive government.

It is about time we restored democracy to Queensland.