



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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### LABOR GOVERNMENTS, ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): As Queenslanders celebrate 150 years of independence, families and communities everywhere are learning the heavy burden and long-term price of almost 20 uninterrupted years of single-party government. The dark stain of the deceit, corruption and cronyism of the Premier and her Labor government can now only be removed with an independent royal commission that is free to scrutinise and explore every aspect of government culture. It is obvious that this morning's questions, which were ruled out of order, would not be ruled out if there was a royal commission. They are questions that could be answered in a royal commission.

**Mr Reeves:** That's untrue.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** If there was a royal commission they are questions that could be addressed by the commission because of the broad investigations such a commission would be able to carry out.

**Government members** interjected.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Wendt): Order! Members on my right.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Accountability and transparency have become mere words for this government that lives and breathes on spin, advertising and showmanship. Budget dishonesty has led to record debt levels, the loss of the AAA credit rating that was once the hallmark of our economy and a fire sale of assets as part of a rushed ad hoc privatisation agenda. A power-at-all-cost mentality has led to the state Labor government actually passing laws to make it legal for the Premier and her ministers to lie to parliamentary committees and Labor's MPs now act as judge and jury when their parliamentary colleagues face possible criminal prosecution.

Election dishonesty has led to a corrupted electoral system that can allow the government to maintain power with minority support. It has led to the deliberate election eve concealment of unpopular and costly policies which were revealed within just weeks of the election having been held. Maternity has replaced merit, success fees have replaced fair tendering and access to government is by fee rather than by appointment or need.

In 1999 Tony Fitzgerald said in his report—

The Inquiry could not have proceeded without public confidence, cooperation and support. The power of some of the individuals involved, and the type of issues raised were such that it would have been impossible for the Inquiry to have succeeded without public confidence, cooperation and support.

That meant the inquiry had to be as open as possible, so that the public, including people with information, could see that it was a genuine search for the truth. Such a course was also necessary so that the Inquiry could generate momentum to overcome any attempt which might have been made to interfere.

Some 20 years on we are once again faced with the spectre of corruption, maladministration, cronyism and deceit from a Labor government that has so conveniently clung to the shadow of Fitzgerald when it suited it but when faced with a wave of allegations levelled squarely at this Premier and her government all that had come before has been swept aside. Just imagine if instead of the Fitzgerald inquiry the government had launched a green paper for public discussion. Imagine if the questions in the

green paper had been written by the Premier's own office and confined only to those issues the Premier wanted to discuss. Then imagine that a simple one-month time frame had been put in place for all submissions and then imagine that the committee was deprived of investigative powers, deprived of the ability to call witnesses and deprived of the ability to access cabinet decisions.

Laughable as it may sound, the above model is exactly what the government's green paper into integrity and accountability is. It is a far cry from the meaningful efforts of the corruption-fighting Fitzgerald inquiry that was independent of institutional government, had access to cabinet decisions with the powers of a royal commission and whose terms of inquiry were expanded upon three times. That is why today I present the LNP's response to the Premier's green paper and a blueprint for reform and change that culminates in the call for a royal commission; an independent, open and transparent commission of inquiry into the allegations of corruption, cronyism, maladministration and deceit that have become part of the DNA of this Labor government.

In 1996 the former opposition leader and former Premier Peter Beattie reflected as to whether the window of opportunity opened by the Fitzgerald report was starting to close. Now it is apparent from the actions and inactions of this Premier and her government that the post Fitzgerald era is dead and the stench of corruption, cronyism and maladministration has returned. This new era of Labor government shall be marked in history as the post-Nuttall era which the LNP wants cleansed through a major commission of inquiry well beyond the confines of institutional window-dressing or a mere green paper that is worth nothing more than the paper it is printed on.

This blueprint I present today raises more than 30 questions that Queenslanders must be allowed to have a say on, including the need for a full royal commission just like the Fitzgerald inquiry was. These questions must be canvassed if there is to be any legitimacy to the ultimate outcomes. The people of Queensland deserve no less.

In his assessment of the current Labor government in Queensland, corruption fighter Tony Fitzgerald observed access can now be purchased, patronage dispensed, mates and supporters are appointed and retired politicians exploit their political connections to obtain success fees for deals between business and government. Far from trying to address and dismantle the core structures upon which corruption and lies have emanated, the Bligh Labor government resists a full royal commission and instead releases as a distraction a simple green paper limited to a sprinkling of issues that only the Premier and the Labor Party want the public to discuss. It is a green paper engineered for public relations and designed to give an appearance—and just an appearance—of a tired and corrupt government trying to clean itself up. The purpose of the opposition's response and blueprint is to provide Queenslanders with an opportunity to discuss the full ambit of anti-corruption measures that must be on the table. These are the issues that a royal commission must be allowed to explore, free from the influence of institutional government.

Fitzgerald was not given a time frame; he was given a blank cheque to root out corruption and reform the political landscape. He was not bound by only being able to investigate official misconduct that amounts to criminal behaviour; he went to the root cause and effect of government and set about dismantling institutional decay. For 11 years a culture of corruption, nepotism and cronyism has been allowed to grow and flourish in the Queensland Labor government. To add insult to injury, special laws were even passed to make it legal for the Premier and ministers to lie to parliamentary committees conducting investigations. For each of the last 11 years the Premier has sat around the cabinet table as a minister, Treasurer, Deputy Premier and Premier. How is it she did not see, say or hear anything and claims she does not know anything?

In 1995 the Premier entered state parliament and in her very first speech thanked her campaign worker, Di Fingleton. Three years later Di Fingleton was appointed Chief Magistrate against the appointment process recommended by the corruption-busting Fitzgerald report. In 2000 the Shepherdson inquiry forced Jim Elder to resign and Mike Kaiser was also forced to resign after admitting to electoral fraud. He was later appointed as the Premier's personal chief of staff and she approved a \$100,000 salary increase for him saying he was a mentor for other ministerial staff. The same Shepherdson inquiry found that Paul Lucas, the member for Lytton, made an opportunistic enrolment at the same address at which Mike Kaiser had fraudulently enrolled. He would go on to become Deputy Premier to Anna Bligh. In 2005 a CMC inquiry found that Anna Bligh's friend and cabinet colleague, the now jailed Gordon Nuttall, deliberately lied to a parliamentary committee about overseas trained doctors. The Premier subsequently seconded a special motion of state parliament exonerating Nuttall from facing criminal charges over his lies.

**Ms Bligh:** Two minutes, no names! Where are the names? Names! Secret dinners!

**Mr LANGBROEK:** They are at the ECQ and you will get them. In January 2006 the Acting Premier, Anna Bligh, announced that the Labor government would introduce laws that made it legal for her and other ministers to deliberately lie to parliamentary committees.

Fast forward to July 2009 and, after legalising lying and seeing a string of Labor members of parliament and mates either jailed or questioned over allegations of corruption, bribery, assault and unethical behaviour—those are the things we have had to deal with over the past few months—today we had questions ruled out of order that only a royal commission could answer. As the Labor government enters this new era of corruption, cronyism, maladministration and deceit, I urge all Queenslanders to have their say on the questions this government never wants answered and join with the LNP in calling on this Premier to show true leadership and establish an independent, open and transparent commission of inquiry into the practices of this Labor government—

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** You are the Premier and you are carrying on like a goose—over almost 20 years of uninterrupted rule. The people of Queensland deserve no less. The Premier has been found wanting on honesty, transparency, accountability and integrity. That is what the people said on the weekend when they judged her in the poll. They will judge her at the next poll. We need a royal commission. The people of Queensland, which is the best state in Australia, deserve no less.