



Speech by

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Hansard Tuesday, 6 October 2009

QUEENSLAND ECONOMY

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning the Premier and other ministers talked about having the stomach and a hunger to provide reform. The Premier is walking away from nearly 20 years of government, saying that she does not want to look at the services that we on this side think state governments are all about providing. As I travel around this state the people of Queensland tell me that they want government to provide the services it is supposed to provide with the \$37 billion income—in this case \$39 billion—that the government is spending. They want the government to provide services and they want accountability, integrity and honesty in government. The Premier did not provide that in the lead-up to the 21 March election.

Let us look at what this Labor government, after nearly 20 years, has provided in terms of services. We are committed to providing better services. The Premier has said that she wants to set targets. She often walks away from those targets and sets new ones. We have seen it in all the portfolios she has been in, especially the Education portfolio. When we look at our economy, we have a \$37 billion income this year and a \$2 billion deficit—something we never had under coalition governments. The people of Queensland expect the cherished AAA credit rating as a given, not an achievement. They do not expect that a government will go bust in a boom, as this government has done, and they do not expect assets to be privatised in a mad panic fire sale.

Between 2000 and 2008 the government received \$34 billion extra into its coffers. That has all gone. We have issues in health where medical doctors are not as important as spin doctors. In the last couple of weeks the Minister for Health suggested that tired doctors should be drinking more coffee. We want roads that are actually for cars to drive on, not just for them to be parked on. In education, under this Premier, who is a former minister for education, our kids have gone from the top of the class to the bottom of the class in Australia. The people of Queensland want reading, writing and numeracy to be more important than slogans. They do not want, as occurred in the last couple of weeks, a situation where Professor Geoff Masters makes recommendations about how to improve those results and suddenly the Minister for Education comes up with a new suggestion that involves flying squads going into difficult areas where results need to be improved. That is not the service provision that the people of Queensland expect.

It is the same when it comes to the environment: we want science, not politics determining policies as to where dams should and should not be built. In terms of vegetation management, in 2004 and 2006 the words were, 'This is a line in the sand for rural producers and the people in the rural sector of our economy.' We supported that, but now we are looking at it in terms of the deal that was done with the Greens before the election and the uncertainty that this has created in the economy regarding issues such as the stamp duty on transactions. The line in the sand has now been shifted for primary producers and people in the rural sector. It is the efforts of the rural sector that have saved us from going into deficit. The contraction of the economy has been assuaged a bit by the primary industry sector.

Queenslanders expect services for those in need, such as the disabled and children, and where the elderly are not compromised by structural mismanagement. We also expect jobs to be created for real Queenslanders, not for the Premier's friends, mates and relatives. Last week, in contradiction of what the

Premier said in the lead-up to the election, we had a typical example of the lack of honesty of the Premier who tried to make out that 250 front-line people will be provided in junior positions to make up for 250 bureaucrats. In the lead-up to the election the Premier promised Queenslanders that they could count on her. There was no talk about jobs for jobs and saying, as the Premier said this week, that it is a scheme that will pay for itself as we replace more senior corporate staff with newer, younger front-line service delivery officers. The Premier said in the lead-up to the election that her government would provide more front-line services. There was no talk about sacking people, as is happening in these redundancy programs.

Services are what the people of Queensland want. They are happy to have reforms, but they do not want to see compromised services as a result of those reforms. This government is walking away from the paucity of services it provides. Now it is talking about reform. We had reform in local government in the last term. We now have a local government sector that is in disarray. Labor is once again walking away from what it has created and trying to create the illusion that it is doing something different that will make Queensland better. We are not stuck in the fifties and sixties; we just want services to be provided in this state for people who have paid their taxes and deserve to have those services provided in an economical and efficient way and who do not deserve to be left with a deficit and a debt that their children will not be able to jump over.

Of course, to get those better services we need investment in our economy. That is something we are committed to doing. We are committed to stopping the crisis management of this government and growing the economy, which is something those opposite have given up on trying to do. This Labor government cannot see a way to get out of its \$37 billion in, \$39 billion out. We are committed to growing the economy with the expertise and experience that we have in various businesses. If we were in bankrupt New South Wales looking to invest anywhere else we would balk at Queensland, which has lost its AAA credit rating. We have a AA credit rating, a record debt to last generations, we went bust in a boom and we did not plan for population growth. Of course business is reluctant to invest and create jobs when it sees a Labor government embarking on a panic-stricken fire sale of assets as part of a concealed privatisation agenda. Business questions government competence when it sees this state going through what it has gone through, with billions of dollars worth of deficit over the next four years and, of course, \$85 billion of debt that has exploded in the last few years. Businesses will balk at investing and creating jobs if contracts are based on Labor mateship, not on merit.

The Queensland Treasury Corporation has the sole responsibility for our public sector debt. Its performance is difficult to reproach considering the circumstances the government has placed it in. The chairman's report shows the total borrowings for 2008-09 exceeded \$17.5 billion and it is forecast that this will rise to \$22.5 billion for 2009-10. This compares with borrowings in 2006-07 of \$5.6 billion. It is worthy of note that the 2009-10 state budget forecast government borrowings are \$14 billion compared with the Queensland Treasury Corporation program to raise \$22.5 billion on behalf of the public sector—once again raising more than we need to. No wonder the Treasurer was on a roadshow last week trying to raise funds when our liabilities are reported to total \$92 billion. Reserves have been severely depleted.

The financial report of the QTC is carefully presented to perception-manage vulnerability to a further downgrade in the state's credit rating by Moody's and Standard & Poor's. The chairman and the chief executive of the QTC concede that the agency would face difficulties in executing the state's borrowing program without the Commonwealth's AAA rap on its paper.

The chairman's report implies that the state's credit rating continues to be under sustained pressure. This is a government that went broke in a boom and now the Treasurer, who inherited this financial situation from the former Treasurer and now Premier, has put us into this position of debt and he was out there last week desperately organising funds. That is because this government refused to provide accountability. Legalising lying does not lead to open government; it leads to corrupt government.

We have a green paper that has been set by the government and judged by the government. Can members imagine if Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen had released a green paper on the issues he wanted discussed, set up a panel with people he had appointed and dismissed submissions he did not like? That is what the Premier is doing now. Every time someone makes a submission, including someone who sits in this House every day who is not a member of the government, the Premier dismisses it. Imagine if Sir Joh had set a one-month time limit and refused to give royal commission powers to investigate deals and appointments? It would have been considered laughable. In this state success fees have replaced brown paper bags and access to government is based on cash to Labor, not based on need and merit. We will grow the economy, we will stop the crisis management and we will provide services for the people of Queensland.