



Speech by

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**MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE**

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### **INTEGRITY BILL & COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY (CORRUPTION, CRONYISM AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR) AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.31 pm), in reply: I rise to sum up the debate on the Commissions of Inquiry (Corruption, Cronyism and Unethical Behaviour) Amendment Bill and want to reflect on what has brought us to this point. I note the contribution of the member for Whitsunday, who does not want the issues raised by this side of the House raised. Clearly, the member is caught up in the same spin cycle that the government is caught up in. I heard the honourable member standing up for the Premier and say that she was elected in her own right. We all know about the circumstances of that election and what has happened since—that is, that this Premier went to the electorate with a manifesto—

**Ms Jarratt** interjected.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** It is very clear that the Premier was elected with a manifesto that has changed completely since the election, and that is a point that no-one can deny and that the electorate clearly sees through. Very obviously we have had 11 years of a government that has come to treat this place as if it owns it. It has no regard for the rules, rights and obligations placed on it as a government. Public confidence in the political system is fundamental to the operation of government. Low levels of confidence and trust in government lead to dissatisfaction and a diminishing respect for the role of governments and the institution of parliament. In Queensland we can thank the Labor government for rubbing this institution.

I introduced this bill to provide for an opportunity for a broad sweeping, independent inquiry into the past 11 years of Labor rule to sweep aside any hangover of corruption that will haunt it now for the rest of its days and to dismiss allegations of cronyism that, with every new Labor mate appointment, will go on haunting it and to expose every dodgy deal, questionable public expenditure and backdoor deal that this government has done and will go on doing. It is a sad fact that this government clearly has got something or a whole number of things to hide if it is not willing to open the books to a whole-of-government, warts-and-all examination of the last 11 years of its questionable rule.

The Premier was sworn into this House in 1995 and since 1998 has sat around the cabinet table with the likes of Gordon Nuttall and Terry Mackenroth. Clearly, the Crime and Misconduct Commission is a watchdog designed to uphold public accountability and integrity. It is not designed to act as a full-blown royal commission inquiry into this Labor government. No-one inquiring into an individual will ever expose the widespread allegations of corruption, cronyism and unethical behaviour that spawns from this government on a daily basis. It seems with each new day it is a new Labor mate, another Labor government member or some other dodgy Labor link that is exposed.

Let us have a look at the performance of the CMC in this last financial year. In 2008-09 the CMC did not use one power to enter. It used 80 notices to discover information, which is almost 75 per cent less than the number used three years ago. This year the CMC has made only 44 notice to attend hearings, down from 121 two years ago. What is concerning is that, despite the fact that the CMC now refers most matters back to the department the complaint came from for investigation, some 29 per cent of all matters

are still not finalised within 12 months. If we cast our minds back to the Davies royal commission of inquiry, the facts are that this came about because of the capacity of the CMC being greatly stretched, and that was just to look into one hospital. How on earth can anyone expect the CMC to get to the bottom of 11 years of this government's dodgy dealings?

This government has a great opportunity today to clear the stench that follows it, but it has instead chosen to run and hide and allow its own skeletons to fester. I want to go back to the words of the Clerk of the Parliament in his submission to the green paper in which he said—

In considering ethics and integrity, it must be appreciated that the perception of ethics and integrity in a system of government is as important as the reality. Indeed, perceptions are reality.

The reality is that the great majority of public officers, including the great majority of members, are hard working and have the public interest as their priority. The great majority are honest, ethical servants of the public. Unfortunately, the actions of a few harm the image of all public officers.

Let me touch briefly on what some members had to say during the debate. In keeping with his recent contributions, the Attorney-General did not really give us much at all in the way of trying to defend his own government. He provided us with a rant on his role and the role of the Attorney-General in general, and I thought I would comment on that first. The Attorney-General at the Commonwealth and state level occupies in effect two offices—a common law office of Attorney-General and a ministerial office. The incumbent is therefore subject to at least three potentially conflicting responsibilities: as Attorney-General, as a minister of the Crown and as a member of parliament. The duties and responsibilities of the two latter positions are well known. Less clearly understood are the duties and responsibilities of the common law office of Attorney-General.

According to Carney in the *Bond Law Review* Volume 9 Issue 1, it is apparent that the role of the Attorney as the guardian of the public interest is not as far reaching as that noble title might suggest. The functions outlined by Edwards in both his texts are quite specific and there is no acknowledgement of some all-encompassing responsibility to take positive steps to protect the public interest whenever it is threatened. Certainly, as the title to chapter 6 in Edwards's 1984 text states, the Attorney has a 'leading role but no monopoly as guardian of the public interest'.

The Attorney made it clear in his contribution to the second reading debate that his independence could easily be compromised when he said—

I stand behind the Premier on this very significant process to reform integrity and accountability in Queensland. The Integrity Bill 2009 is a very significant bill.

Based on these remarks, it is apparent that the objectiveness of our state's first law officer could be compromised in his willingness to hide behind the skirt tails of the Premier instead of doing his job as protecting the process of justice.

I found an interesting article out of the University of Adelaide recently. The title was, I think, fitting for our current Attorney: 'The split personality disorder of Australian Attorneys-General'. After yesterday's colourful and all over the shop contribution where he accused this side of the House of potentially taking bribes from motorcycle gangs, one has to ask whether the Attorney-General has any real grasp on what his role is, and that is something that the Attorney should answer. He also came in here and questioned whether members remembered the first bill that I introduced. He said—

Do members remember the first one? The first one was the disgraceful 'integrity' bill that he tried to put through the House amending the Criminal Code about misleading parliamentary committees. There was nothing new in that.

Once again he attempts to mislead the House. I clearly presented a bill that had significant changes in the way it was written from our previous bill. It shows that he failed to even read the bill, and it is a further indication that he supported his parliamentary colleagues when they exonerated corrupt Labor mate Gordon Nuttall. The Attorney-General has a short-term memory. He failed to acknowledge the litany of Labor mates—D'Arcy, Rose and Nuttall—who all committed criminal offences when he spoke about former National Party ministers who went to jail 20 years ago.

The member for Toowoomba North and the member for Brisbane Central in their contributions seemed to make the point that there was no need for a royal commission. It begs the question as to whether there is so much corruption, cronyism and unethical behaviour that it would potentially cost too much to have an investigation. The member for Barron River made a similar contribution.

I thank all of those members who spoke in support of this bill and say to those opposite that the stench of corruption, cronyism and unethical behaviour will never escape this Labor government. With each new day and with each new Labor scandal—and I understand there is an unfolding Labor scandal coming out of today's evidence at the CMC hearing and we will hear more about that—the already irreparable reputation of a government with no integrity is being further destroyed.