



Speech by

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MOTION: CRIME AND MISCONDUCT COMMISSION INQUIRY; GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.28 pm): I move—

Following revelations at the CMC inquiry into Labor's roting of sports grants, this House calls upon the Attorney-General to sufficiently resource the CMC so that the current inquiry can be expanded to look at the awarding of all grants, from all departments where staff from a ministerial office have been involved.

The Premier claims that the Labor sports rorts are limited to one grant in one office by one staffer. Once again, it now becomes another issue where every time an issue of probity gets investigated by one investigative body or another, the Premier says, 'Oh, well, that's only an exception,' but we on this side of the House claim this is a culture that is a part of this Labor Party which has been in government for almost 20 years.

We heard at the CMC inquiry today that public servants have admitted they are intimidated by what they think the minister wants—that they write what they believe the minister wants as an outcome. That means there will be grants given in other departments that are obviously a reflection of what they believe the minister wants; it is an abrogation of what the Public Service is all about, according to the model that most of us understand the Public Service to be. That is exactly what was identified this morning when the Premier refused to tell the House about the 2009 guidelines. I quoted this morning from page 42 of yesterday's CMC hearings, when Ralph Devlin SC asked the member for Sunnybank about an audit report. He said—

I'll just read this to you to see if it rings a bell about Warrigal Road State School.

As I understand it, these were hundreds of thousands of dollars of grants that were given to this state school. Mr Devlin continued—

"No reason was provided to support the school's inclusion although it should be noted that schools were a targeted group per the 2009 guidelines." Does that ring any bells with you?

The witness, the member for Sunnybank, said—

Not particularly. I mean, I guess Simon and I, and maybe even Craig MATHESON—

who I think is the deputy director-general—

had discussions about these issues but that doesn't particularly ring a bell.

This morning we asked the Premier about the 2009 guidelines to see whether they were potentially guidelines that might have been something to do with an upcoming election. The Premier ruled out that any of these guidelines existed or that they had come from her office. Once again, we have a sense of this culture that pervades this government, a government that thinks it knows best and that says that whenever there are inquiries they are one-offs and are not repeated anywhere else. Yet more and more information is coming to the fore to prove that serious questions need to be asked and that therefore the CMC needs to be properly resourced to be able to investigate these matters.

In the debate on the Integrity Bill which has just concluded, I made a point about the CMC not conducting as many investigations as it has. That was not to point out that the CMC is not doing fearless

investigations; rather that potentially it might not be as well resourced as it should be to investigate the things it needs to. There is no doubt the CMC would be looking with one eye at its budget as well as the outcomes it needs to achieve, because that is how all agencies including public sector agencies have to work. They have to make sure they stick to their budgets.

The bottom line is that we will never know the facts about all the other agencies of government and all the other public servants who may have been intimidated by ministerial staff. This is a culture that I hear constantly from public servants: the fact that ministerial staff with new ministers are more concerned about their minister's media profile than what their department is actually achieving. That is what the government needs to deal with here in terms of funding the CMC so that we can check all grants and all staffers.

Clearly, the people of Queensland have seen a culture develop that we have identified a number of times and that other Queenslanders identified in their submissions to the government's green paper, which of course the government conveniently neglected to include in the Integrity Bill just concluded. The bill included things to improve integrity provisions, but they are ones that really do not go to the heart of many of the 224 published submissions. The purpose of the motion is to require the Attorney-General to provide enough funding to the CMC to slide the ruler over every grant that has been across every Labor ministerial desk.

The government forgets that outside these walls there are over 4.4 million Queenslanders who see the reports in the media that there is more corruption. With every day and every new report of corruption, the public confidence is eroded and those 4.4 million Queenslanders lose another bit of respect for this Premier and this corruption riddled government. We have seen numerous items identified in the discussion paper that was put out by the Premier. A culture amongst government was identified at the CMC hearing yesterday, when Mr Pearce said to the witness, the member for Sunnybank—

Is there any formal training that is given to ministerial advisers, to your knowledge?

The member for Sunnybank said—

Yeah. Ministerial advisers get formal training by the Premier's office on a fairly regular basis.

Again, there is a question there of what sort of formal training they get in terms of how grants are to be given. As I said, questions were raised today at the hearing that we intend to further probe. There will also be more probing by the CMC as to these sorts of activities and whether public servants are stood over by ministerial advisers. They are the questions that have been very seriously asked in this House and they are a continuation of the culture of this government that Tony Fitzgerald spoke about in July this year. I know I have quoted this a number of times, but this is what Tony Fitzgerald said about this Labor government in July this year—

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 businesses and government.

That is exactly what the Premier has been trying to say that she will stop through success fees. She refused to rule it out in February during the election campaign, but now she has belatedly moved to stop it, following on the lead from the then opposition leader who proposed this on 9 February 2009. They are the commitments that we have made.

I would also like to remind the Premier and members opposite that when there were controversial issues when the coalition was in power between 1996 and 1998—such as the gun laws—there was a bipartisan effort to take Labor MPs around Queensland to make sure these very difficult provisions that had to be brought in had maximum support from both sides of the House. Yet, in this case, we see parliamentary committees being overridden along party lines, and that is why the inquiry is needed. It does not mean we have given up on our calls for a royal commission. We still maintain that such an inquiry is desperately needed.

In the meantime, we have serious queries about what has happened, in terms of the green paper from the Premier, with the Public Service Act. In the green paper, there was a one-paragraph overview of the Public Service Act. Clearly, in section 3.5.2 of the Fitzgerald report, Fitzgerald observed—

... there does not appear to be any reason why there should be power to make exemptions from the requirement to advertise public service vacancies, and why all vacancies should not be advertised.

Yet obviously we know that the Labor government routinely ignores advertising. We know about the Premier appointing her husband to a top public sector job without the position ever having been advertised. Fitzgerald also recommended a process for special appointments such as directors-general, commissioners and other similar appointments. The point is that any CMC investigation may well go to these sorts of issues as well, because of the Labor process of appointing their mates and Public Service hangers-on into positions where they know they will potentially be intimidated—and those are not my words but the words of a public servant today at the CMC inquiry.

There are members on the government side who maintain that I am just referring to some part of the Fitzgerald report that does not apply to them, but that just shows their attitude after 20 years. They think

Fitzgerald does not apply to them. They have set their own rules. They are so arrogant. They come into this place and think they own it after 20 years, and they have no regard for the people of Queensland.

We on this side are determined to restore honour and integrity to the political process in Queensland. We promise that we will consult with the people of Queensland about the issues that we take to the election—unlike that lot opposite, who come into this House and thumb their noses via the decisions of their executive. We are determined to change the attitudes of this House. The government maintains that it is providing sufficient funding to the CMC, but of course we know that the equivalent cost of the Fitzgerald inquiry in current dollars is about \$170 million per year. Clearly, that is a significant impost. No-one is suggesting it should be that much, but the current allocation to the CMC needs to be adequate to ensure that it is able to do a frank and fearless investigation of all of these matters so that we can make sure that our levels of Public Service and life are as good as they can be in this great state.