



Speech by

## John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Thursday, 26 November 2009

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### VALEDICTORY

**Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.22 am): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the Christmas valedictory. In March the Premier was successful in winning an election by the people of Queensland. As I have done in the past, I congratulate her and all of her members on their success. I note that we have 19 new members in the House, as the Premier has already mentioned, which has added to our weight. Of course, some of us who were here before the election have certainly added to our weight a little bit since the election! We always look our best during election campaigns when we have lost weight and then by the end of the year we start to experience the joys of the catering section of the parliament, which the Premier mentioned. But very importantly, I know that, irrespective of our differences, both sides of the House are committed to the democratic process—all 89 members, which includes the Independent members.

I want to wish the Premier, her ministers and all the other members of the government the very best for 2010. But I also assure her that the opposition and I will continue to fulfil our democratic role of holding her and her government accountable to the people for their actions.

I note that the Premier spoke about our sesquicentenary celebrations. I think many members have been to numerous events throughout the year—whether it was the Black Diggers Remembrance Ceremony at Burleigh Heads a couple of weeks ago with the honourable member for Burleigh or various concerts and church services that many of us have been to. But if anything showed how the colony, and now the state, has changed over the past 150 years it was the multifaith service that the Speaker organised this morning. I think that service typified how far our state has come. It was a wonderful service. We saw multifaith prayers from the Jewish, Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Sikh and Baha'i Faith faiths. It certainly was quite amazing to see that this morning. We also saw the optimism of the young girls from the Canterbury College choir. For those members who missed them this morning, I recommend that they try to see them when we hold this event again either next year at the start of parliament or at the same time next year. As I say, I think the multifaith service is really an indication of how our state has come such a long way in 150 years.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank you for your management of the House and for keeping a fair balance on both sides of the House. There is no doubt that the parliament has been enhanced by balance. I would like to say that my side of the House is certainly appreciative of the balance that has been shown and your involvement of us in the parliamentary process. Mr Speaker, engaging with Queenslanders is a theme that I know you have upheld as part of your principles, and I know that you want Queenslanders to come to see this place and that you want to make parliament much more relevant to Queenslanders. On behalf of the opposition, I want to commend you for the standards that we have in this House. I want to thank you again.

Mr Speaker, I want to thank many of your staff, including Brett Nutley, the Indigenous liaison officer; Graeme Kinnear, whom many of us are happy to assist in education services; and Glenda Emmerson. There are over 190 staff of the parliament. I read in the parliament's annual report the length of service of many of our staff members. We appreciate them very much. Over the past couple of days we have all been

asked to fill out a survey. I said to a couple of opposition members that I find it very hard to criticise anything about our parliamentary staff because I find them so willing to help. If anything is wrong, very rarely do we have to do much to get it fixed. On behalf of all of my members, I want to say that that is really appreciated.

The leader of the organisation—the CEO—is the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie. He is a consummate professional. His courtesy and the assistance that he and his staff, including the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries, provide to all members of the opposition is much appreciated—especially, as the Premier mentioned, the advice on the intricacies and obscure provisions of the standing orders, some of which we heard about this morning from the Speaker. I also want to thank Neil for his honesty and courage in expressing his views about issues of integrity in government and how they should be addressed in this state. I want to thank, too, the Table Office, led by Leanne Clare.

I acknowledge Bob Bradbury, the employee of the year for parliament, who followed Judy Small, our parliamentary attendant, and Margaret Edmonds the year before that. I also want to thank those many other parliamentary staff who may not have as much liaison with parliamentary members and therefore may not get that recognition of becoming the employee of the year. As I have said, we appreciate the efforts of the parliamentary staff, particularly Bob Bradbury, who will always supply our parliamentary papers at a moment's notice.

I want to thank the security staff; all of the attendants; the Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Jones, of course; and 'Happy' John Polistena, as I call him. They provide the unobtrusive services that ensure the effective operations of the parliament. Of course, we are very aware of the need for security and protection. I also thank our attendants here in the parliament, who I know have been given new chairs. That will make it more difficult for them not to fall asleep.

The work of the committees enhances the work of the parliament. Members of committees are assisted by the full- and part-time staff of committees. Through committees, members are able to make a long-term contribution to the development of good policy for Queensland.

As did the Premier, I thank the Hansard staff. Our words of wisdom are permanently recorded by Lucinda Osmond and her staff. As the Premier mentioned, they keep up with us and make us sound much better than we actually are, which is something for which we are all very thankful.

I thank Mary Seefried and the staff of the Parliamentary Library. They are always giving us objective research into what are sometimes very contentious issues of policy and politics. They have legendary confidentiality as at times the opposition explores some murky areas of public administration that certain people would prefer not be exposed to the light of day.

Many of us lead strange lives in this place, and that would not be possible without the services of parliamentary catering. Jaakko Ponsi and his staff are forever cheerful in responding to our needs. I am also very thankful for the fact that we have a lot more permanent staff. There is now a recognition factor for all of us who work with the staff. We really appreciate their cheerful nature, no matter what time of the day it might be.

Without naming everyone, I thank corporate services—Michael Hickey and all of those who work in areas as varied as human resources, finance, travel, information services, IT and property—as well as the cleaning staff and the maintenance staff who have already been acknowledged. I also thank the people who work on the switch, where my mother-in-law used to work with Pat and Pauline many years ago. I want to thank them because if we thank them then sometimes they come to the drinks afterwards.

I have now occupied the role of Leader of the Opposition since 2 April 2009, and what a year it has been. I do not think anyone who has not served in the role could understand and appreciate the duties and responsibilities, and that certainly was the case with me. There is no handbook for being the opposition leader. You must learn on the job. You have to make sure your biorhythms do not go too up and too down or you end up with major mood swings. You basically have to apply your fundamental philosophies and skills to the multitude of challenges that confront us.

I must say my task has been eased by having as my deputy Lawrence Springborg, the member for Southern Downs, who has occupied the role and knows the challenges that I confront on an hourly basis. He has given wise counsel and consistent support and it has enabled me to address and overcome the many challenges that I have already confronted. I know that I can continue to rely on this support as we continue our political battle to the next election.

This year the member for Southern Downs, Lawrence Springborg, together with the member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, reached a milestone of 20 years service in this parliament, along with the member for Sunnybank, the Leader of the House, and of course the member for Rockhampton, although he had interrupted service. Very few of us will serve more than a few terms in parliament, so to have

survived the vicissitudes of politics for 20 years, and with no end in sight to their service, is a record that does these members proud.

I want to thank my shadow cabinet and other parliamentary members, including the 11 new members from this side of the House, for their faith and support in me as opposition leader. I freely acknowledge the great gift of leadership they have bestowed on me. I remember sitting here and hearing the former Premier talk about the fact that there is no greater honour than leading your party, and it is certainly something with which I concur. I assure them that during 2010 I will continue to strive to do my best to discharge the obligations of the position.

I want to thank the Opposition Whips, Mike Horan and Rob Messenger, and of course the government whips, with whom I know they have to work every day. The whips have always ensured that LNP members are here on time to participate in the debates. I cannot let the opportunity pass without thanking the Leader of Opposition Business, the member for Callide, Jeff Seeney. He fulfils his liaison role with the Leader of the House with distinction, ensuring that the business of the House is processed with all due dispatch. At the same time, he has never shirked his role in holding the government to account.

I want to thank my staff, the 20 staff whom I have in the opposition office who serve both me and my team. I want to specifically mention my chief of staff, Kevin Martin; my political adviser, Jake Smith; my media adviser, Scott Whitby; my executive assistant, Kim McInnes—I will not name everyone else—and my three electorate staff, Josie Stinson, Cathy Ermer and Jeszaen Lee. Josie and Cathy have been with me since I was elected nearly six years ago, and they do a sterling job in maintaining things for me in my electorate office in Surfers Paradise, where I am unable to be as much as I was in the past. My staff deserve the highest of praise for all of their efforts.

It is the nature of politics that staff resources available to an opposition are always less than those enjoyed by an incumbent government. Nevertheless, my staff consistently perform above and beyond any formal obligations imposed upon them as employees. I am certainly grateful, and I know my parliamentary team is grateful for all they do to assist us. I want to thank all the electorate staff—about 180 electorate staff between all 89 members. They are often unsung and unseen and sometimes they feel like they are missing out on the exciting things that we do in parliament.

I also want to acknowledge that there is no politician in this day and age who can claim entry to this place without the support of significant elements of the community. In the case of both me and my colleagues, we are proud to represent the Liberal National Party in this parliament. With the proud history of our two former parties now merged, we have put behind us the difficulties of the past and we offer the people of Queensland a unified and consistent solution to the problems that confront Queensland. So to state president, Bruce McIver, and state director, Michael O'Dwyer, and the tens of thousands of loyal branch members and supporters throughout our state, I say thank you for all of your efforts. I look forward to redoubling our efforts in 2010.

It is through the prism of the media gallery that the vast majority of the Queensland community form their views about politics and politicians. Whilst from time to time we all have cause to cringe and complain—usually very quietly—about how our actions and words are reported, I have observed over the news cycle how things balance out. I want to thank the gallery for the vital role they play in ensuring our democracy continues to endure and thrive. I want to thank them for things like the Media Club and the lunches they organise and of course the media ball that many of us enjoy at the end of the year. We understand they have a job to do, and sometimes we need to realise that what seems important to us in terms of media coverage is not as important to everyone else, but it is something that we really feel.

I want to place on the record the love and support that I receive from my wife, Stacey, and our children, Chloe, Bronte and Piers. As I know many other members feel about their families, I think they really are a rock of sanity that enable us to be aware of what really are the important things in life. I know that my family is typical of the people I meet throughout Queensland. In this job, I am privileged to travel around Queensland, and I meet many people who are optimistic about the future and they want it to be a better place for all of us. That is something that is certainly typical of my family, and I want to thank them.

Christmas is a time of celebration and hope. We celebrate the birth of a child whose life and death has transformed the world and offered hope to billions. So it provides us at this time of year with an opportunity to rejoice in our families, consider those who are worse off than ourselves and recommit ourselves to making this world a better place for all. I extend to all members of this House, to all who work for and in the service of this House and indeed to all Queenslanders my very best wishes and those of my wife, Stacey, for this Christmas season and for a better and brighter 2010.