



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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COMMENTS BY MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PARTNERSHIPS; A1GP

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (12.08 pm): What do we hear from this government? We hear excuses, excuses, excuses. I begin my speech by inviting the Minister for Local Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships to stay while I answer the outrageous slurs that she made in her ministerial statement this morning. I ask the question: who held the referendum in 1967 to give Aboriginal and Islander Australians full citizenship and the right to vote? Was it Labor? No, it was the Liberal-National government of Harold Holt. Who put the first Aboriginal Australian into the Australian parliament? It was not Labor. No, it was not Labor. It was the Liberal Party—the forerunner to the LNP—that chose to elect Neville Bonner to a casual Senate vacancy in 1971. Who put the first and only Aboriginal Australian into the Queensland parliament? Was it Labor? No, it was the Nationals—the forerunner to the LNP—who had Eric Deeral elected as the member for Cook in 1974.

Let us look at the record of the LNP versus Labor. Labor has offered words; the Liberal Nationals have offered achievement. What is more important for the recognition and empowerment of Indigenous Australians? Is it Labor's record of sorry motions that have not had one follow-up action, or is it the record of the Liberal Nationals, who empowered Aboriginal and Islander Australians by giving them the basic right to vote—a right that was denied by successive Labor governments? What is more important for the recognition and empowerment of Indigenous Australians? Is it Labor's record of welcoming ceremonies, or is it the record of the Liberal Nationals, who empowered Indigenous Australians by actually putting members of that community into our state and federal parliaments?

When we talk about racism, who brought in the White Australia policy? Labor! Who ended it? The Liberal-National coalition under Harold Holt. We are committed to closing the gap, not just talking about it. All Australians are the same. I support traditional owners being acknowledged, but it is important that we acknowledge that all Queenslanders need to be provided with the same rights to health and education outcomes in this state, and we are committed to delivering that. Often when I am listening to welcoming ceremonies Indigenous Australians come up to me to say that this state Labor government is letting them down time after time.

So there is the answer to the minister. We get from this minister trite misrepresentations of things that I said in a speech that I stand by and that this side of the House stands by. The minister is just another hapless minister who is reflective of all of those hapless ministers. When we look at what happened over the parliamentary recess we see that, surely, public administration in this state has reached a nadir in every portfolio: in Health—as identified yesterday; in Education and in Transport.

Of course, today in this place we heard the hopeless excuses of the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport. Time after time he could not answer the questions, shutting the gate after the horse has bolted—after we warned about this and asked for details about due diligence last year before the A1GP. There are serious questions that the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport cannot answer. Instead we had trite responses. Although the minister is talking about proper processes now, we said then that

proper processes should be put in place. We were demonised for supposedly not standing up for the Gold Coast, when the cost to the Gold Coast and to the taxpayers of Queenslanders ended up being far greater. We knew what the government did not know. That shows that it is time for an 'Under new management' sign to go up in Queensland. People have lost faith in this government. It is clearly time for a new government.

This morning the Premier referred to the Access Economics study that showed that Queensland is coming fifth in Australia. That other resource-rich state, the economic powerhouse that is Western Australia, is coming first. But Queensland is coming fifth. Yet the Premier has the gall to refer to that report. Over the summer what did we get from the Treasurer? He gained only a bit of arrogance and, of course, lost more votes. If it cannot run a car race, no wonder this government cannot run this economy.

We had the minister telling us about Terry Mackenroth. Given his appalling performance as chairman of the partnership and negotiation with the A1GP, what on earth does Terry Mackenroth have over this government when over the weekend the Premier was prepared to say what she said? At the time that Terry Mackenroth was appointed to the position over John Cowley, former minister the Hon. Tom Barton said that he was the best man for the job. But there were serious questions asked. The minister has said that due diligence was carried out by IMG. Now we know that that is not true, yet the minister has not come back into this place and corrected the record. Clearly, the questions about Terry Mackenroth are numerous. He received a significant benefit from being the chair of the Gold Coast Motor Events Co. That benefit was worth enough for him to give up lobbying. I know that when Terry Mackenroth took on the job the remuneration increased from \$15,000 to \$40,000.

The 'Fox'—Terry Mackenroth—has a reputation for being street smart and cunning. But it turns out that he got ripped off and taken in by a Nigerian internet scammer—or the equivalent thereof. The due diligence for this massive deal that was worth \$11.6 million to the government and up to \$60 million to the Gold Coast in tourism dollars was done in a two-week period and nothing was written down. It just defies belief. Nobody in private enterprise can believe that anyone who would be associated with such an enterprise could ever be considered to be not responsible for the job—and the Premier is basically saying that no-one is responsible and the minister has also tried to say that no-one is responsible.

I turn to some of the circumstances of the A1GP as identified by these two damning reports: the Williams report and the Auditor-General's report. The A1GP company was based in the British Virgin Islands and, therefore, the sanction fee would have to be taxed at 30 per cent. But the A1GP people did not want to pay 30 per cent tax on the money, so they asked the government to gross up the payment so that the government effectively paid the tax. When the government refused it was suggested that the A1GP people should set up a company here in Australia that the government would contract with. Knowing that it was contracting with a \$2 company with likely no assets here in Australia, the government happily signed a contract where it would pay US\$1.8 million sight unseen on the basis of a nod and a wink from Terry Mackenroth. The one report the government and the Gold Coast Motor Events Co. had to go on was a financial report by Dun and Bradstreet. It recommended a credit limit of \$750 to a maximum of \$3,000. What did this lot do? On the basis of that recommendation of the credit limit, the government paid over \$2 million.

Mr Nicholls interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Hoolihan): Order! Member for Clayfield, your leader has the floor. You may keep your comments to yourself.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but it gets worse. Any business proprietor or manager will tell you that the single greatest risk in contracting with other parties is that they might go broke or go into liquidation. But not this government! On hearing that one of the A1GP companies had gone into liquidation, Terry Mackenroth and/or the minister—but we are not sure because, of course, there is no communication written down—sped up the payment scheduled under the contract. So when the people in England said, 'That's an internal restructuring,' were any checks done by this government and by this minister? No checks were done at all. They actually sent a cheque for \$1.8 million to a company that had been put into liquidation. They brought forward the payment by two weeks. The company said, 'If you give it to us now, you can discount it by \$400,000,' and they did it. They sent them \$1.8 million the day after the company had been liquidated.

Where is the minister in all of this? There were no performance guarantees put in the event of nondelivery—a standard process when you are working in conjunction with contractual obligations. Yet when we asked about this last year, this hapless minister assured us that everything was okay. He did the standard thing that we saw him do today, and that was to criticise the notion of the question as to whether we have any alternatives. Clearly, we do. The Premier asked us what our alternatives are. Our policy is to not waste the money of Queensland taxpayers. An amount of \$4.5 million has now gone. Of course, the member for Sunnybank implicated the Premier by saying that she had nothing to do with it when she was the minister for sport.

David Williams compiled a report for the state government which stated that Queensland Events should be the government's lead agency for the staging of events. That report was completed in August 2008. The government has had that report since then. Obviously, the government did not act on the recommendations of that properly. Now, the government has moved the event closer to Queensland Events.

Our policy is to restore Queensland's international reputation to attract and host international events. That will happen only when the 'Under new management' sign goes up in Queensland. In the meantime, after all that has happened, why has the new V8 race not moved totally away from the responsibility of the Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport to Queensland Events under the control of the Premier? Does the Premier have no confidence in Queensland Events and its new chair, Geoff Dixon? Why is the government maintaining the same corporate structure when both Williams and the Auditor-General said that a complex corporate structure assisted in leading to the problems? If the government had the Williams report on events for over 12 months, why did it not take note of Mr Williams's recommendations in the report and seek the advice of Queensland Events? Why is a new event not now under the authority of Queensland Events? This government cannot get it right!

(Time expired)