



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 23 March 2010

SALE OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): This morning we have seen the Premier running away and squibbing a chance to have a public debate on Labor's privatisation plans. A challenge was issued to the Premier this morning to have a public debate in a public forum. Kevin Rudd is prepared to have such a debate with Tony Abbott, but the Premier has squibbed and is refusing to have a privatisation debate until the next election.

By the time of the next election, more than \$15 billion of public assets will have been sold, including parts of Queensland Rail, the motorways, the ports and the forestry plantation. This shows why the majority of Queenslanders think that Anna Bligh, the Premier, did not tell the truth in the lead-up to the last election. We know that the Premier told mistruths to the people of Queensland. Now she wants to scurry away from having a public debate about these mistruths. It is very clear. She does not want to have a privatisation debate, does not want to have a referendum, does not want to have an ALP conference, does not want to have a special people's question time and has refused to have a public debate.

This weekend just gone marked the fact that 12 months ago the people of Queensland were conned. They trusted this Premier and her government to deliver on a plan to secure the prosperity of this great state of ours. But instead they got a mistruth, a great big mistruth. Since then they have got excuses, and they are tired of excuses. A year ago almost to the day they were taken for a ride. They were told 'jobs not cuts'. But instead this Premier and her mean and tricky little Treasurer hid the details of the plans that they undoubtedly had to sell off key state assets in a fire sale.

The people of Queensland were not told of the great mistruth before the last election. They were not told of the Premier's plan to raise public debt from \$64 billion to almost \$85 billion over the forward estimates. It is obscene in how much it is, it is obscene in how quickly the Labor Party has clocked it up and it is obscene in the burden that it places on every Queensland child and family for years and years to come. In the last week we have seen this obscenity on show. We have seen the government continue its ham-fisted plan to sell off the farm at the expense of future generations of Queenslanders.

The LNP and I are against a fire sale of key assets. We are against the money being spent on simply paying down interest because Labor cannot balance the books, and I am against the underhanded, sneaky and, quite frankly, deceitful way this Premier and her little Treasurer have gone about deceiving the people of Queensland to keep this tired old Labor government afloat. It must be clear to those on the other side that their days on the treasury bench are coming to an end. The people of Queensland are fast making up their minds that they want this mean, sneaky and arrogant government to come to an end, and the people of Queensland are fast forming the opinion that this Premier is simply keeping the seat warm until later in this term when the faceless men of the Labor Party choose who will be Queensland's new tsar.

In the last week we have seen the Premier and her little Treasurer take yet another step in their arrogant plan to sell off the assets. Last week we found the government had decided to fatten up the cow for market day. The media got wind of the government's decision to jack up tolls on the Gateway Bridge and the Logan Motorway. In a desperate and dirty attempt to make the toll roads more profitable and

therefore fetch a better price when they are sold off, this arrogant government is hitting Queenslanders twice. When they eventually sell off Queensland Motorways, the innocent commuter will ultimately have to pay. Many of them have put their trust in this Premier and Treasurer. When they travel to work each day, when many of them visit family and friends and when many of them try to drive to a hospital, they will be paying a higher toll, and when the motorways are sold the tolls will go up even higher.

The Treasurer is sounding like Wayne Swan, his federal counterpart, before the last election. Wayne Swan in the election campaign of 2004 said that the money that was offered by the then Treasurer Peter Costello was 'not real money'. The Treasurer last week said that an increase of 90c was actually only an increase of 35c. That is the cost of the toll increase for a normal car but some vehicles will cost up to \$10 to cross the Gateway Bridge. This is a Treasurer who has lost touch. He cannot accept that the people of Queensland find this increase harsh and unjust. He has spent so long having someone else pay his fuel bills that he thinks this extra increase is not real money. Tell that to the people who are having to pay hundreds of dollars more per month to go across the Gateway Bridge and are having to top up their accounts. This is another impost on top of registration costs and on top of the other charges that we know have made this the most expensive state in the country in which to own and register a car.

The people of Queensland are sick of this government which thinks that the good people of Queensland have bottomless pockets that can pay more and more for a government that is unable to control its spending. Spending is in Labor's DNA. They cannot escape it. Like Gollum to the ring—they just cannot help themselves. From its earliest days, to the Whitlam government, to the excesses of the last almost 20 years here in Queensland, the Labor Party has never been able to control its hunger for higher taxes and more spending, and it is the ordinary and hardworking men and women of Queensland who have to pay more for this government. Now through higher tolls and privatised roads, the people of Queensland will cop it in the guts again.

Not only are they intent on jacking up tolls and hurting Queensland families, the Premier and Treasurer will never be honest and upfront with the people of Queensland. On notice, the opposition asked the Treasurer to advise the parliament and the people of Queensland what expenses this government had incurred to prosecute its so-called Renewing Queensland Plan—the plan to sell off the state's assets and deprive future generations of Queenslanders of the prosperity these assets create.

On 11 February this year, we asked the Treasurer to come clean with the people of Queensland and detail the cost for the Premier and the Labor Party to break faith with the people of Queensland and indeed their own supporters in the union movement, and what did the Treasurer say? He said nothing. In a 2½-line answer to our question on notice—so arrogant is this Treasurer, so out of touch is this Treasurer, so slippery is the Treasurer with Queenslanders' money—all he said was that the costs would be revealed in the Treasury's annual report which, as we all know, is usually published well into the following financial year. As every member of this House knows, it will almost be the end of 2011, possibly the start of 2012, before we see the annual report for this financial year—well into the future and the government of course will be hoping well after the fury that it has created dies down and the assets are all sold off. That is how sneaky this Treasurer is. He will not tell the people of Queensland how much money is being burnt up on propaganda, consultancies and marketing—all lining the pockets of, amongst others, Labor mates. In the meantime, all that money—the millions of dollars spent convincing the people of Queensland that selling the state's assets is good for them and that they should look the other way—could have been used to reduce waiting times in our public hospitals or spent on Reading Recovery teachers in Queensland's underfunded schools where tests show that there is a crisis of underachievement going on.

In the last week we saw the awful truth—and it was raised here again by the honourable member for Callide—of Labor's mismanaged plans to sell off Queensland Rail. In the last week and in the last couple of days we have seen Martin Ferguson and Anthony Albanese criticise this Premier and the Treasurer's plans to sell off parts of Queensland Rail. Martin Ferguson told it how it is—Labor's plans to sell off parts of Queensland Rail will not necessarily be the best way to create investment and jobs in the future. As I said, Anthony Albanese is opposed to the vertically integrated way that this incompetent state government is planning to sell off Queensland Rail. Anthony Albanese has slammed this government for potentially creating a monopoly in rail—creating a private monopoly from a public monopoly.

The model chosen has no efficiencies, no productivity improvements and more supply chain problems. The Premier and Treasurer should release the advice from their advisers saying why they are so insistent on selling QR as a monopoly. But this government will not even listen to its own senior federal colleagues. The Premier is determined to sell off Queensland Rail in a way that will damage the prosperity of this state for years to come.

We had the charming sight of the Treasurer calling the coal companies the dogs who caught the bus, but that is so typical of Labor. They fail Queenslanders. It does not matter what they do or say; it is just another Labor excuse. On Friday, to show how delusional and out of touch she is, the Premier had the audacity to put her unpopularity down to the fact that she is female. What an offensive statement! It is offensive because of what it says about what the Premier really thinks of her fellow Queenslanders, and it

is offensive for the double standard that it perpetuates. What an offence to women everywhere, including in this place, and it shows her desperation.

The Premier, her Treasurer and this tired and worn-out government will do anything to cling to power. They lack the trust and competence to govern Queensland for the future. This Premier and her government are in terminal decline. We are determined to offer a strong alternative to restore the confidence in the people of Queensland. We will get back the AAA credit rating. We will express policies across a range of issues, big and small. Most importantly, we will do it with honesty and integrity, because that is what people expect of their leaders.