



Speech by

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BLIGH LABOR GOVERNMENT

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.30 am): We have heard today that hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent to fix the Health payroll fiasco. Leaked documents reveal that hospitals are being cut back in terms of overtime for doctors and nurses, pathology for the sick and even beds for the dying. The dying, the sick and our health professionals are suffering at the hands of an incompetent, uncaring and heartless Labor government. As the health minister's incompetence grows, the cuts to vital services get deeper.

Let us focus on what is proposed to be cut. The list includes palliative care beds and beds for the dying—beds where patients spend their last days of life. Labor plans to cut access to beds for the dying. What has this Labor government become? Members opposite should ask themselves this question: how low has the government sunk that it has arrived at the position where it reduces the number of beds for the dying? How on earth is it proposing to cut back on pathology? Which patients will be denied pathology tests?

On top of that is the brilliant idea to not fill vacancies—in other words, employ fewer doctors and nurses. As doctors and nurses leave, they will not be replaced. It is pure genius from the members opposite! Yes, employing fewer doctors and nurses will save money, but I have one question: what about the patients? Labor's incompetent and inept financial management is impacting directly on patients and their health.

It is obvious that the cost of fixing the bungled payroll system has also been partly funded by cuts to Queensland health services. Patients pay the price for Labor's bungling. Wasn't it interesting to see the Treasurer, 'Captain Smug', at his arrogant best this morning proclaiming victory after disposing of one of Queensland's great assets? Let us not forget that Labor has flogged off Queensland Rail in a fire sale so it can pay the interest on its massive debt for just 18 months.

However, Labor's debt just keeps climbing. There is more debt today than when it announced the sale of Queensland Rail. The debt rises faster than Labor can sell assets. The sale of Queensland Rail is an historic low point for Labor in this state. Anyone watching the smug performance of the Treasurer yesterday would be entitled to think that he was rejoicing in his own financial mismanagement. It seems to have escaped him—

Mr FRASER: I rise to a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr LANGBROEK: Beautiful.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr FRASER: I find the remarks, especially from the Leader of the Opposition, offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr LANGBROEK: I withdraw, Mr Speaker. It seems to have escaped him that he is flogging off assets because he cannot balance a budget. Asset fire sales are nothing to be proud of. Ongoing structural deficits will not be solved by selling off the family jewels. Labor goes on spending more than it

earns and selling assets to pay the interest bill on the ever-increasing debt. That is no way to run a household budget. That is no way to run a business. More importantly, that is no way to run a government.

What we have opposite is a decomposing government—a government slowly rotting away; a government that is compost in the making. Government members know that, too. Half of the cabinet are planning to walk away before the next poll. They are secretly plotting and planning an escape route to life after politics.

The Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading cannot wait for defeat at the next election to get away from a job that he now hates. The Minister for Local Government is on the verge of a tropical retirement. The minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries has his sights set on fishing. The Minister for Child Safety and Sport, 'Ferdie Free', is planning a career in sports administration. The Minister for Natural Resources reckons he has a future as a consultant to the mining industry. The Minister for Public Works is planning a retirement making furniture in his shed. The Minister for Community Services and Housing is thinking of a quieter life as a mother. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services is apparently warming to the ideal of a less stressful existence away from the 24th floor of the State Law Building. Even the Deputy Premier has his bags packed. So keen is he to be rid of the health ministry that he is already touting his replacement—Cheverton is his name and Lytton is his game. Queenslanders will be glad to see the back of him. The Deputy Premier is but a seat warmer.

Nine ministers in all—half the cabinet—are eyeing off retirement. That is not a front bench; it is a departure lounge. Add to that another 10 parliamentary secretaries and MPs who want to avoid the voters' baseball bats. They are the members for Mount Ommaney, Broadwater, Whitsunday, Albert, Pine Rivers, Mundingburra, Woodridge, Burleigh, Sunnybank and Pumicestone. They are not waiting for the people of Queensland to sack them; they are going to fire themselves. It is a sizeable list of members.

Mr Fraser interjected.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable the Treasurer will cease interjecting.

Mr LANGBROEK: These members are doing the decent thing. They do not have the hide to ask their electors to vote Labor again. These soon-to-be retirees know that Labor has sold out its constituents and the voters want revenge. They cannot defend Labor's fire sales. They cannot defend Labor's waste. They cannot defend Labor's debt. They cannot defend Labor's massive price rises on fuel, water, rego and electricity. This is now a lethargic government led by a listless Premier. Labor is indifferent to the plight of Queenslanders and out of touch with the impact its financial mismanagement is having on their household budgets.

The cost of living in Queensland has soared. We were once the low-tax state. Now, many of our taxes and charges are the highest in the country. Where once southerners flocked to Queensland for our strong economy and low taxes and charges, the reverse is now happening. Queenslanders are leaving and heading out of Queensland to where the employment is and where there are lower taxes. They are economic refugees. Many of them are employed in the building industry. This is an industry that has been stifled almost out of existence by a government that has put unreasonable red tape in the way of property developers, forcing up the cost of land. This is yet another example of this toxic Labor government's detrimental impact on Queensland's economy.

In contrast, in the lead-up to the next election the LNP will put before Queenslanders an agenda and a number of visionary plans for our state's future—plans that will ensure we get our state from the bottom of the ladder in terms of economic performance, service delivery, education standards and cultural facilities back where we should be: right at the top. The Labor government is out of puff and is limping its way to the next election.

An LNP government will restore our state's reputation. An LNP government will rebuild our economy. An LNP government will re-establish the integrity and accountability of government. An LNP government will strengthen government services, not cut them because of financial mismanagement. Queensland cannot afford another three years of Labor incompetence.