



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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VALEDICTORY

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.23 pm): The 150th year of the Queensland parliament has been a good year. I note the comments of the Speaker in the annual report that the highlight was the parliament reaching its 150-year milestone. As he has said, many countries around the world would dearly like to point to a similar record of democracy. I have heard him say it at citizenship ceremonies, I have heard him say it at book launches, I have heard him say it to school groups, and it is a very good point. In light of the Amnesty motion that we have heard debated tonight, many other countries would like to be able to point to something similar. I cannot stress enough the importance of parliament in maintaining democracy separate from the executive government.

The LNP team and I approach the new year with an enormous sense of optimism and a firm belief that the people of Queensland will approve the many and innovative policies to be announced up until election day. There are brighter days ahead for Queensland—fresh ideas, fresh goals, fresh standards and a fresh start for Queensland. I do not want to point out the failings of the government in chapter and verse. We have been doing that for 18 months and we will be doing it all next year as well. I want to thank everyone for the year that we have had. I want to thank all members of the parliament, including the Premier and her government. Even though there are fundamental issues that divide us, there is still much more that unites us in support of our parliamentary democracy and our fundamental rights and freedoms as Queenslanders and Australians.

Mr Speaker, you have displayed great fairness in running parliament and seemingly boundless patience that I know we have tested many times. I want to thank you for many of the innovations that you have brought in in terms of involving the opposition. I want to thank your staff, Joe and Mary-Anne, as well. I want to thank the Clerk of the Parliament, Neil Laurie, for provision of impartial advice as to the opportunities to use the forum of parliament for the public good; the Deputy Clerk, Michael Ries; and the First Clerk Assistant, Leanne Clare. Leanne Clare's leaving of the Public Accounts Committee led to Deborah Jeffrey becoming the head of that Public Accounts Committee and then the Public Accounts and Public Works Committee and then subsequently being named the Clerk's choice for Parliamentary Staffer of the Year.

I note and appreciate the independence and integrity of the parliamentary staff and their commitment to improvement through innovation and diversity and their commitment to respect for clients and fellow workers. I want to thank the staff of the Table Office: Meg Hoban, Annette Henery and Bob Bradbury. They are always cheerful and of assistance. I thank the security staff led by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Jones. We saw this morning in the parliament that in this age of global terror there are always incidents that are likely to happen. The poor member for Burleigh thought that she was experiencing a moment of global terror this morning when someone threw something from the balcony. She thought she had been bombed. Didn't you, Christine?

I want to thank the parliamentary attendants led by happy John Polistena. They help whenever needed, especially the ones who are here in the chamber: Ron, Judy, Jim, Margaret, Angie, Rona and, of course, Dennis and Lyn who are over at the Annexe. Can I also say that—for all that I am naming staff, I

know there is always a danger you may leave people out—there are many staff who work behind the scenes that we as parliamentarians do not necessarily see. The Speaker acknowledged that at the parliamentary awards ceremony. They do not interact with the MPs as much, but we certainly thank them as well. There are about 190 staff altogether and I want to thank all of them. I want to thank the committee staff: Stephen Finnimore, Renee Easten, Deborah Jeffrey—who, as I mentioned, was the Clerk's choice for Parliamentary Employee of the Year—Rob McBride, Rob Hansen and Julie Copley, for providing substantial professional assistance to all the committees to enable them to carry out the tasks given by the parliament.

I thank all of the Hansard reporters, led by Chief Reporter Lucinda Osmond, for recording for posterity the contributions, both good and bad, of members who all take it so seriously and who are so concerned about how they sound and who go up there and say, 'I want to hear the tape. I want to hear whether it was right.' Lucinda says, 'Yep, that's the ruling. No more correspondence will be entered into', and we all have to cop it. Thanks to all of the Hansard reporters, especially when the microphones go off and they are leaning over trying to hear what it is that is said.

I want to thank the Parliamentary Library staff led by Chief Parliamentary Librarian Mary Seefried. The staff there answer the many and varied queries of members with confidence, professionalism and quick dispatch. I thank them, as I always have, for the great research briefs they provide on various topics for the parliament. I thank the staff of Corporate Services, who I know the Premier has acknowledged, who look after the many and varied needs of members and their electorate staff: Michael Hickey, Peter Morris, Mike Coburn, Jason Gardiner—and too many others to name. I thank the catering team, led by Jaakko Ponsi and the executive chef Sucil de Silva—your choice, Mr Speaker, for Parliamentary Employee of the Year. They keep us and all of our guests amply and satisfactorily fed.

I want to also put on record our appreciation for the fact that many of these staff are now more semi permanent or permanent staff and we can rely on their service. I thank Mary, who has been in Stranger's for a long time, and Mario, Cliff, Margaret, Ellen, Colleen, Barb, Gabbie and John. I thank the cleaning staff, the gardeners and the maintenance staff who keep both the House and in particular our offices and our bedrooms clean and a substitute for the home that many of us miss. I also want to thank the switch staff where my mother-in-law worked for many years. Pauline, who was on the switch for a long time, was given a very nice ceremony when she left. I thank the people who are still there: Pat, Evelyn, Joanne, Coralee and Margaret. Even though their role has changed over the years they are not forgotten.

In this 150th year of the Queensland parliament we know how much it has changed from 1860 when 26 members of parliament were elected by fewer than 2,000 voters—if only it were so easy nowadays. The Community Engagement section of the parliament has done so much, particularly to explain to our younger generation the vital importance of parliament in maintaining our democracy. I want to mention in particular Glenda Emmerson and also our Indigenous liaison officer, Brett Nutley, and senior education officer, Graeme Kinnear. I hope we do not forget to have a photographic record of our parliament that we have had every term since I have been here. We have, of course, next year to do that.

In P150 we had book launches, the launch of Speakers' Corner, open days, more online information and citizenship ceremonies—all of those being part of your efforts, Mr Speaker, carried on from previous Speakers as well—to make sure that the people of Queensland should feel that this is their House and that they should feel a part of it. I commend you, Mr Speaker, and all of the staff on the books that were released about the first parliamentary librarian and, of course, the very good book that details the history of the parliament from 1957 to 1989.

I want to thank our electorate staff. I know the Premier has done it, but often they are to the ordinary citizen the real face of the parliament. I want to thank in my own electorate office Josie Stinson and Cathy Ermer in Surfers Paradise. I thank my parliamentary colleagues and my deputy Lawrence Springborg, my whip Mike Horan, leader of opposition business Jeff Seeney, members of my shadow cabinet, all parliamentary members of the LNP and, of course, members of the government who serve in those roles as well. I want to thank my opposition office staff, in my case my PA especially, Kim McInnes, Ross Musgrove, Jake Smith and Scott Whitby, and I also want to thank Kevin Martin.

Opposition staff work, as do ministerial staff, extremely long hours with few resources. I want to thank them. I want to thank the LNP organisation led by president Bruce McIver and state director Michael O'Dwyer. I thank in particular the thousands of members and volunteers for whom we as parliamentary members are proud to be the parliamentary LNP representatives. I want to thank the media, specifically the parliamentary press gallery with whom we interact on an almost daily basis and who take great delight in trying to get us to answer what they regard as the tough questions and also those media practitioners both in the electronic and print areas who practise their craft in towns and regions large and small throughout Queensland. It is through the media that we expend much effort in communicating with the people of Queensland and learning their concerns.

In relation to community groups and individuals, my role involves articulating an alternative vision to restore Queensland to the lifestyle it has enjoyed before and which it can again and in formulating this vision I am assisted by an increasing input from community groups and individuals across the whole of

Queensland who constantly provide me with advice on how Queensland can be improved. I look forward to even further input in 2011.

I want to thank my wife and children. They sacrifice much to enable me to do my job. I know that other members also receive the same level of support from their loved ones. I acknowledge that to people of different or no religious faith Christmas still provides a basis for considering how we as human beings interact. I want to say that may the principles of goodwill to all men and peace and love for one another continue to underpin the actions of each of us as we approach the challenges of the future.

The demands of working in politics often means that we do not spend much time with our families. Our families are the unsung heroes, of course, and Christmas is a time when we can see a bit more of them. I sincerely hope that all members and staff get to relax with their loved ones, just as I will with my wife, Stacey, and my children.

Premier, thank you for your comments about schoolies. I have not heard too much from my daughter. I have heard her on the radio being very careful about the things she had to say. I do not know that she and Oliver have met. I do not know how much she is venturing outside the premises she is staying in. She has her scholars day at her school on Saturday. It is a bit tough having to front up to your own school on the day after schoolies. I wish everyone who is at schoolies a safe time. I want to thank the various departments who are helping there, as well as the council and the volunteers.

Finally, I hope all members travel safely, enjoy good health and cheer, relax and put their feet up, and I look forward to seeing everyone back here for a great 2011.