




Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Tuesday, 23 August 2011

MOTION: GOLD COAST, CRIME

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (5.31 pm): It is a pleasure to speak to the motion moved by the opposition leader. There are strong words contained within this motion. It states—

That this House condemns the Premier and this government for its failure to provide strong leadership against crime and particularly for its failure to take timely action against crime on the Gold Coast.

When we look at perception equalling reality, we see the end result epitomised by last night's 7.30 program on the ABC. Last night's program, hosted by Leigh Sales and broadcast nationally, carried a report from Peter McCutcheon. In the introduction to a story that covered recent events on the Gold Coast she asked, 'Is the Gold Coast the most dangerous place in Australia?' If we think about the effects of this show going around the country, and potentially internationally as well, we realise that it will cause massive damage to our reputation. The show itself had Assistant Commissioner Paul Wilson, Superintendent Paul Ziebarth and Inspector Steve Flori from the Coomera police district speaking about the recent events on the coast and Operation Seymour. There are real concerns about a show like this looking at what is happening on the Gold Coast. This is exemplified by a recent article by Mike O'Connor in the *Courier-Mail* of 25 July. He wrote an article titled 'Surfers Paradise feels more dangerous than New York as crime spirals out of control'. Imagine what this is doing to our reputation.

Government members interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take the interjections from those opposite. This is what the *Courier-Mail* is saying. This is what the people of the Gold Coast are having to put up with. Imagine what this is doing to our reputation nationally and internationally, not just for tourism but also for business.

The Gold Coast has taken a battering in other areas, such as development and retail, thanks to the mismanagement of this Labor government, both state and federal. But those of us who live there—those of us who are bringing up our families there, who work there and who love the Gold Coast—are very concerned. We know all what it has to offer and we know that, whilst perception equals reality, these expressions of concern about violence and crime being out of control are of concern to everyone on the Gold Coast and should be of concern to everyone within Queensland.

Of course there are other significant issues throughout the rest of the state. That is what this motion tonight is about. It is focused on the Gold Coast, but there are issues in today's Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* about an alleged assault of a police officer at Mount Morgan, issues in Fortitude Valley about which the wives of serving police have written to me and ongoing problems with juvenile justice and gangs in Cairns as well as in other areas such as Townsville and the Sunshine Coast. But the problems are crystallised by what has happened on the Gold Coast. That is why this motion condemns the Labor government for allowing the situation to deteriorate to its nadir—the death of Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding on 1 June. This was after a spate of armed robberies, violent assaults and drug related crime. There have been over 100 armed robberies since the start of the year and at one stage on the Gold Coast we had five shootings with three deaths in seven weeks. But what has the state government done, and around that time what did it do?

Paul Lucas, the Deputy Premier and member for Lytton, came to the Gold Coast on 20 July and said, 'We have no crime problem on the Gold Coast. We're not like the USA.' His ignorant comments subsequently left him with his credibility in tatters when even the police minister came to the coast and acknowledged that day that we had a serious problem on the Gold Coast. The police minister said that a police helicopter and police numbers were an operational matter. Then, of course, he acknowledged that there was a problem when he came up with a five-point plan, which again the *Courier-Mail* said on 26 July in its editorial 'has the distinct air of a stopgap measure hastily cobbled together to give the impression of something being done'.

When it comes to the police minister's ability to procure funding, I tried to extricate details of regional funding at the estimates hearing on 19 July. The minister could not provide the details of regional funding in about five hours of hearings but the district figures, which show that there had been a decrease in funding of \$11 million over the two years—

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

Mr LANGBROEK: Stop the clock, please.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Elmes): Stop the clock.

Mr ROBERTS: The member is misleading the House. He knows full well that the funding for the Gold Coast region has increased over that period of time.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, there is no point of order. Start the clock. I call the honourable member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Of course, the minister acknowledged in his own press release subsequently that there has been a reduction in district funding. He then says—

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

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Stop the clock.

Mr ROBERTS: The member is misleading the House. The media release I put out clearly showed there had been an increase in funding on the Gold Coast.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Sorry, it is not a point of order. Start the clock. I call the honourable member for Surfers Paradise.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I want to refer to the minister's own press release on 21 July which states—

Mr Roberts said district expenditure in 2010-11 was less than 2008-09 ...

I am prepared to acknowledge that he subsequently has said that a large number of district functions were moved to regional functions in this period. I am acknowledging that. But the problem is that the minister could not give us those details in five hours of estimates hearings. He is hoist with his own petard by being unable to provide regional figures. This is the only region in the state that supposedly had this change made to it. The minister has created the problem for himself by being unable to provide those figures. As Mike O'Connor said in his article—

It's difficult to see the State Government embracing zero tolerance and the massive concentration of public order resources that it requires when last year it cut police funding on the Gold Coast by \$11 million.

Now we have Operation Seymour with 50 officers. The minister has been crowing about its success today in the House saying that this has enabled Gold Coast police to do their jobs, as the 50 police proved that with more police they can apprehend more offenders. Currently police cannot do investigative work because they have too many tasks and too many jobs to go to. Our police want to do proactive policing, targeting crime hot spots, cultivating informants and providing backup to fellow officers.

When we look at police numbers over the last couple of years we can see the problem. There have been 280 police added since 2008-09. There were 10,277 in 2008-09; in 2010-11 there are 10,557. But when we look, as we did at the estimates hearing, at the operational shift allowance we see that the number has actually declined. That has gone from 7,396 in 2008-09 to 7,347 in 2010-11. In the Coomera district the government's own figures show that there were 188 police for over 200,000 people. There is a significant article in the *Police Journal* of June 2011 entitled 'Coomera Cops a Raw Deal', in which the Police Union talks about the Coomera district being called the 'McDonald's district, where everything is half price' because of the fact that it has so few resources.

We also see that drug crime has exploded on the Gold Coast. The number of reported drug crimes in 1999-2000 was 4,625; in 2009-10 the number was 7,694—an increase of 66 per cent. Drug trafficking has exploded on the Gold Coast. Six traffickers were caught on the Gold Coast in 1999-2000 and 22 were caught across the south-east region, but in 2009-10 that number had gone to 43 drug traffickers on the Gold Coast and 57 across the south-east region—a 700 per cent increase in drug trafficking.

Mr Roberts: Talk it down.

Mr LANGBROEK: I say to the minister that we are not talking the Gold Coast down; we want the Labor government to focus on the Gold Coast. This is a government that has ignored the Gold Coast. Government members on the Gold Coast have not stood up for our community—unlike the member for Mermaid Beach, who stood in this place on 2 August, the member for Currumbin and me as the member for Surfers Paradise. We are always talking about supporting our police and giving them the resources they need, but government members on the Gold Coast—in fact this whole government—have ignored the Gold Coast and the government has taken away the last Gold Coast minister. There is no representation coming from the member for Albert, the member for Logan, the member for Broadwater or the member for Southport. They are standing there mute. Now on the eve of an election they are starting to make a few promises and trying to get the voters to come back and vote for them.

Let us contrast the government's poor leadership with the strong leadership of Campbell Newman and the LNP. Campbell Newman came to the Gold Coast on 4 May and stood next to me in a joint press conference and announced a major crime squad for the Gold Coast. That was promised because that was what local police identified they wanted to see if they were given the resources that they deserved. We are listening to local senior police and making sure they have what they need.

The minister said that it was an operational matter and that he is only responsible for resourcing. We have already seen how inefficient and ineffective he is at that. The Premier came back from holidays on Stradbroke Island and said that she had asked the Police Commissioner about it and a few days later it was ruled out. Of course, afterwards, we have now had plans for a major crime squad by Campbell Newman, plans for a police helicopter that the LNP has been promising for five years and plans for more police. In all of those issues, the Labor government has now jumped on the bandwagon and given all of those things.

It is clear that the government is clueless and rudderless because there were no specific plans for the police helicopter and now we have the issue of whether it will actually be suitable for police. That is why we need a change of government. We need a government that will actually listen to its senior police force.

(Time expired)