




Speech by

Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard Thursday, 23 August 2012

PUBLIC SERVICE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (6.04 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all honourable members for their contributions to the debate on the Public Service and Other Legislation Amendment Bill and the foreshadowed amendments. I particularly thank the members on the government side of the House for offering support and offering a level of intelligence in this debate that the members of the Labor Party will never understand.

I will start by referring to a couple of issues raised by the members opposite. The member for Mulgrave led the charge for the opposition in terms of being the first speaker to this bill from the opposition. He talked about public servants. There was a theme in the debate from the contribution of the opposition members in terms of an attack on public servants. The attack on public servants has been happening over the past 20 years by the Labor Party. We announced that we would not be renewing temporary contracts. We did not put those people on temporary contracts. The members opposite cannot come into this place and raise these issues about temporary contracts, when temporary is temporary. If you are employed on a temporary contract, you are employed to do a job for a certain period.

The shadow Treasurer, who led the debate on this bill from the opposition, denies we are in a financial crisis in Queensland. He is denying there is a problem in Queensland with the finances.

Mr Pitt interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! I remind the Manager of Opposition Business that he is already on a warning. I ask you to keep your interjections at an audible level, not at a very loud level.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is amazing looking across and seeing the member for Mulgrave, who aspires to be the Treasurer of Queensland, and who this week during a debate in parliament said that what we are saying about Queensland's finances is rubbish. He thinks there is no problem with the finances. If there was no problem with the finances, why did the Labor Party start the voluntary redundancy program for the Queensland Public Service? Because someone in the Labor Party, or in the department, started to think, 'We have a problem in Queensland.' The problem in Queensland is that we did not have enough money to pay the number of public servants that we had. I think it is a poor reflection on the entire opposition when the shadow Treasurer, the man who aspires to be the Treasurer of Queensland, says that Queensland does not have a financial problem—'Budget problem? What budget problem? No problem at all.' In fact, when we came to government the same Treasury officials said that the current fiscal outlook and the budgetary outlook was unsustainable.

Ms Trad: Table the documents.

Mr Bleijie: The member for South Brisbane should not give me a speech about tabling documents, because over the past few days we have seen the Labor Party not want to help us recover money in terms of the Health payroll bungle. You can go on about tabling, but until such time—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, my apologies, I will address my comments through the chair.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: The member for South Brisbane can go on all she wants about tabling documents.

I thank the member for Coomera for his contribution to the debate tonight and for chairing the committee that looked at this legislation. I thank Minister Elmes for his contribution tonight and for highlighting the fact that the government has a situation that was created by Anna Bligh and Andrew Fraser and that we have to make the tough decisions. As the Premier said, we do not like making these decisions. It is hard on us seeing people walk out of our buildings, and the State Law Building particularly.

We know that if we do not sort the finances out there will be a heck of a lot more public servants going than what is perceived at the moment. If we do not get the finances under control the state will have more problems and we will see more public servants go. That is why the Liberal National government has to make these decisions now. We are doing it now because if we do not sort these issues out Queensland and its public servants will be in a lot more trouble in the future.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: Just on cue, the member for South Brisbane's socialist alliance out the front start their chanting.

Ms Trad: Are you saying their concerns are illegitimate?

Mr BLEIJIE: I am saying that they are the socialist alliance. You are making all sorts of assumptions, which is not surprising for the Labor Party. It is not surprising that you of all people would verbal people.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The minister will address his comments through the chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you for the reminder. The member for Gladstone raised the issue of the Ombudsman. I am pleased to say that I will be watching closely the Ombudsman's new role to ensure that we have sufficient resources for the Ombudsman who has the carriage of those processes. We will ensure that there are sufficient resources. I believe at present there are sufficient resources, but we will make sure that happens. The Leader of the Opposition again spoke about consultation.

Ms Trad: Three days!

Mr BLEIJIE: You are pointing with three fingers and you are standing up. Do you want to sit next to me and interject? For goodness sake! The Leader of the Opposition raised the issue of consultation. Where was the Leader of the Opposition, who was then in cabinet, when the former Treasurer came into this place and the civil partnerships debate took place? Standing orders were amended, voted on by the Leader of the Opposition, to suspend the standing orders so that the motion could be moved to debate it early. We are not guillotining this debate. This went to a committee. We have not moved a motion to guillotine, but keep carrying on like you are and we may just get there.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those on my left will cease interjecting.

Mr BLEIJIE: We have an opposition leader who keeps coming in here saying 'consultation, consultation'. I need not remind members that in 2009 the first legislation we debated under the Labor Party regime was the Vegetation Management Act. It was pushed through and I think it was guillotined. I am not going to cop criticism from the Labor Party about consultation when this went through a committee and there were five sufficient submissions that were put through the committee process.

The Leader of the Opposition talks about job growth. If we do not do what we are doing and make these tough decisions now, we will not have job growth in Queensland's future. We are doing it for job growth.

Ms Palaszczuk: Why didn't you explain it?

Mr BLEIJIE: I will explain it to the Leader of the Opposition so she can get it through her head. This is why we are doing what we are doing. We immediately, within 100 days, lifted the payroll threshold so 5,000 small businesses in Queensland pay less government tax. We are going to increase it in another five years so that another 15,000 small businesses pay less payroll tax. Those opposite do not understand why we do this.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: They do not understand that if a small business pays less tax they will employ more people. Those opposite do not get it. If you encourage and invest in the private sector, they employ more people. If you tax them to death, they sack people. We want to create opportunities in Queensland for the private sector to encourage and employ more Queenslanders. We are well on track to do that. We have frozen registration costs for family vehicles for three years. We got rid of those silly sustainability

declarations resulting in red-tape reduction. The Leader of the Opposition asked what have we seen in the last five months. I will tell her what we have seen in the last five months. We have seen red-tape reduction. We have seen business confidence grow. We have seen jets flying into Queensland that never would have considered coming to Queensland under the Australian Labor Party. We are providing an opportunity for business to grow in Queensland. We are providing an opportunity for business to invest and come to Queensland.

I will tell the Leader of the Opposition what else has happened in the last five months: TattsBet has moved to Queensland providing another 1,000 jobs in Queensland. We are getting people to move to Queensland.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Their head office was not in Queensland.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Leader of the Opposition says, 'We were talking to them.' Well, they were talking to a lot of people, but who signed the deal? I signed the deal to exempt them and give their licence another 30 years. Then the Premier made the announcement with TattsBet.

Opposition members interjected.

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Those on my left. The minister has the call.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition talking about our great new Supreme and District Court, the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law. I will take every opportunity I can to talk about the Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law. What an impressive building. The judges are just loving it.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Minister, resume your seat. I can barely hear the minister speak with the level of interjection.

Ms Trad interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I now warn the member for South Brisbane under standing order 253A for imputations to the chair. I call the minister.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think the Manager of Government Business may wish to go out and get me a Throatie because with the level of interjections I can hardly hear myself through this debate, but long let the interjections and debate continue from the Leader of the Opposition. The Labor Party do not get finances. They do not understand fiscal accountability and responsibility. They think we are doing all this for the fun of it. We are not. The Premier has made that indication. We saw the Leader of the Opposition come in here before and call me names like Pinocchio.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I rise to a point of order. I did not call him that name. I said the *Courier-Mail* had referred to him as Pinocchio.

Mr BLEIJIE: The Leader of the Opposition comes in here and espouses her fountain of wisdom from the *Courier-Mail*. The four people sitting in the corner—the highly paid, overresourced opposition—cannot help themselves. They have to rely on their tactics and calling people names. Does it not remind colleagues of what happened in the election campaign, the type of dirty personal attacks from the Labor Party?

Opposition members interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Those on my left will cease interjecting. I cannot hear the minister.

Mr BLEIJIE: As I was saying, the Labor Party only know one thing in Queensland. They wreck our budgets and then they personally insult people. That is their only tactic: to go to the gutter of politics. We see it time and time again. One would think that the Labor Party would have learnt a lesson from the election but it has not.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: As the Manager of Government Business says, the stench from the gutter of Peel Street is coming through the sewer grates. I can see it over there. Like the old teenage mutant ninja turtles, the green toxic waste is rising from under their seats. They engage in dirty politics and insulting people in this place because they have nothing left to offer the people of Queensland.

Mr STEVENS: Labor mutant turtles.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the honourable Leader of Government Business. The member for Rockhampton raised the issue that we should not have lawyers participating in the QIRC. Newsflash for the honourable member for Rockhampton: lawyers are engaged already in the QIRC. In

fact, when the QPS took the state to the QIRC last year the Queensland Police Union had a couple of barristers and the Queensland Police Commissioned Officers Union of Employees also had a couple of barristers. I think one was an SC.

Believe it or not, the state of Queensland, led by the Labor Party, had barristers act for it in the QIRC. Members opposite cannot come in here, pretend that this is something new and say, 'Oh my gosh, the world is going to fall because we are putting lawyers into the QIRC'. At the moment, lawyers can be involved in the QIRC. We are enabling a better process by which parties can agree. If the other party does not agree in particular circumstances, they still have to seek the leave and approval of the QIRC. It is not a done deal, guaranteed, but lawyers are engaged. Sticking up for the time honoured profession of lawyers, I think it is quite appropriate and that more lawyers is good in all things. I have had that conversation with the Deputy Premier and I know he agrees with me. Lawyers get in there and we get things done. I thank the Deputy Premier for his support of the profession of the legal fraternity.

The member for South Brisbane, who nearly ate her microphone, talked about consultation. I have dealt with that. What I think is fascinating—

Ms Trad: No, you haven't.

Mr BLEIJIE: I did deal with consultation. If the Leader of the Opposition wants me to get a list of legislation from when she was in cabinet—

Opposition members interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: Members opposite cannot say 'no' now. I am taking the interjection. If the Leader of the Opposition wants me to get a list for her and table seven copies of all the legislation that the Labor Party ran through in the last three years, six years, nine years, 12 years and 14 years, I will do it. The Leader of the Opposition will not want me to do that because she knows what will be contained therein. The Leader of the Opposition is waving around amendments. I can remember when this place was led by the Labor Party and I think it was the honourable Attorney-General of the time who introduced 53 amendments to one piece of legislation. I was shadow Attorney at the time and I received them just before the debate. They cannot come in here and say, 'I've been in this parliament for so many years and this is the first time I have seen any of this'. What an absolute joke!

What I think is particularly interesting about the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition is that when she was on her feet the member for South Brisbane was screeching behind her, showing the utmost contempt for her own leader. As we heard in this morning's question time, and I look forward to the day, I think the honourable member for South Brisbane wants to unveil the statue of Sir Joh. I know she is a fan of Sir Joh. I suspect—

Ms TRAD: I rise to a point of order. I ask you to rule on relevance. What can the statue of Sir Joh possibly have to do with the Public Service Amendment Bill?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! There is no point of order. The minister has the call. However, I do encourage the minister to be as focused as possible on the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: I make the point that, in the Leader of the Opposition's contribution to the debate, the member for South Brisbane was screeching behind her leader and I had a visual of the statue of Sir Joh in the electorate of South Brisbane. I guess in that respect there is some slight connection to the legislation that we are debating. I look forward to the day when the member for South Brisbane unveils that statue. I will deal with the contributions of the member for Woodridge and the member for Bundamba at the same time.

Mr Stevens interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: We hear that Cameron Dick will either run for Woodridge or he will be the leader from outside. We do know one thing: in a very short period the member for Inala will not be the leader of the Labor Party and it is likely that the member for Woodridge will not be the member for Woodridge. I will deal with the member for Woodridge and the member for Bundamba together. The member for Bundamba talked about the Queensland government selling out Queensland public servants. There is only one party in Queensland that sold out the workers of Queensland and that is the Labor Party. I know that the member for Bundamba has found her voice in this parliament. Some of us wish she had not found it, but she has found it.

Mrs MILLER: I rise to a point of order. The minister has found his dancing shoes. If you want to look it up on YouTube, type in 'Elvis and Jarrod Bleijie'.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Dr Robinson): Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume her seat. I remind the member about frivolous points of order. I also remind the member that she has been warned under standing order 253A and no such further outbursts will be tolerated.

Mr BLEIJIE: She is just jealous that I used to be a Queensland DanceSport champion in rock'n'roll. There is no need to tell members more; they can view my shows on youtube.com.

Getting back to the bill, the member for Bundamba talked about selling out workers in Queensland. As I said, the member for Bundamba has found her voice in this parliament. She had a very quiet voice when the Labor Party sold Queensland assets. Where was the member for Bundamba when the assets were sold? I can tell the House where the member for Bundamba was. She was sitting down there, crouched down. When the vote was on, she hid in the corner so that the unions could not see her. Let the record show that the member for Bundamba sold out unions in Queensland by voting for asset sales. That is why when Queenslanders watch this debate they do not believe it, because they do not believe the member for Bundamba and the convictions that she has so recently found.

Where was the member for Bundamba, where was the member for Woodridge, where was the member for Mackay, where was the member for Inala and where was the member for Mulgrave when they sold assets in Queensland? Half of them were sitting around the cabinet table when that decision was made. They cannot talk about selling out Queensland workers, because the Labor Party did that a long time ago. I do not think the unions and the workers will ever forgive the Labor Party for what it did in terms of the asset sales. The opposition leader talks about consultation. Let us talk about consultation on the asset sales. What consultation was there on the asset sales? I was in this place when Rachel Nolan was sitting where Minister Davis sits. Now a much better minister is sitting in the chair behind me than when Rachel Nolan sat there. Then minister Nolan was asked the question and she said, 'Queensland Rail is not for sale'. Within hours, then Treasurer Andrew Fraser said, 'Queensland Rail: sold!' It went like that. Then I think they promoted the former minister, Rachel Nolan, to the position of finance minister. This Labor Party is surrounded by hypocrisy. I ask the Leader of the House, how do you sell 'hypocrisy'?

Mr Stevens: ALP.

Mr BLEIJIE: I ask my honourable colleagues on this side of the House, how do you spell 'hypocrisy'?

Government members: ALP.

Mr BLEIJIE: I ask again, how do you spell 'hypocrisy'?

Government members: ALP.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is how you spell 'hypocrisy' in Queensland. Mr Deputy Speaker, that was the last time I will ask. I thank the honourable members on our side of the chamber for their very worthwhile contributions to the debate. This morning the honourable Premier summed it up when he said that we do not like what we are having to do, but we are having to do it for particular reasons. Those reasons are well known to people in Queensland and they are well known to the business community in Queensland. We know that, if we do not get Queensland's finances under control, we will not have a Public Service to worry about. We will not be able to afford any public service and that is why we are doing this. That is why we are having to make the decisions to cut things across Queensland.

The honourable Leader of the Opposition talked about cutting courthouses again. I have ruled that out 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 times. It is on the cabinet website. As I said this morning, what interests me, though, is that it was not the Leader of the Opposition, who members may not know is the shadow Attorney-General, down at the Holland Park courthouse yesterday protesting against any closure.

Mr Watts: Who was it?

Mr BLEIJIE: It was Cameron Dick, the former Attorney-General. What is the Labor Party doing? Is it sending out Cameron Dick to do its protests?

Mr BLEIJIE: It was only an hour ago that I was stopped by the bell while I was in full flight. I am trying to recall where I was at.

Mr Mander: I think you were going really well.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thanks, mate.

Mr Hopper: Start again.

Mr BLEIJIE: Start again! I take that interjection. I think I took an interjection from the member for Toowoomba North in relation to the courts, and I was about to talk about courthouses in Queensland. I was talking about the opposition leader, who was saying that the courthouses were being shut, and that Cameron Dick was out the front of the Holland Park courthouse yesterday. I was reminded by that interjection from the honourable member that we saw the Labor Party in the early nineties in fact cut courthouses and justice services centres by 79, and I corrected the record on that during the week. I suspect that when the then government looked at these issues back then they appreciated that they had to pay down debt and get the state back on track. I think the Labor Party of those days would be quite ashamed at the Labor Party of the modern day.

Mr Pitt: Oh, really.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Manager of Opposition Business that the old Labor guard would be proud of what they have done in modern Labor. We know there are lots of Labor lawyers in the legal profession and lots of old guard Labor lawyers in the profession.

Mr Ruthenberg interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: There is, but a lot of the Labor lawyers who are the old guard Labor tell me that they left the Labor Party in the last few years, particularly after Beattie left and Bligh and Fraser took over.

Ms Palaszczuk: No-one in the Labor Party would talk to you.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection. I talk to plenty of lawyers who used to be in the old guard Labor who might not necessarily like our new tough on law and order policies in terms of their legal careers, but they certainly do not like the modern Labor Party. They do not like what the Labor Party has become. Testament to that is the fact that there are seven sitting opposite. I think the old guard Labor's view is more widely accepted across Queensland.

We have heard Labor members tonight quoting the ReachTEL poll that was out today. I can remember the Labor Party used to say, 'We don't comment on polls,' but now in opposition they live by the polls. I took the opportunity to have a look at this poll. It is a ReachTEL poll, but guess who the ReachTEL poll was commissioned by? The ReachTEL poll was commissioned by Together Queensland. They come in here—

Ms Palaszczuk interjected.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I do not really like commenting on polls; I just want to mention the fact that you mentioned the ReachTEL poll. I want to set the record straight though; it was commissioned by Together Queensland.

Ms Palaszczuk: Have you read it?

Mr BLEIJIE: I have read it and I have got it in front of me. I am reading it here, and question 6 asked respondents what they believed should be the primary focus of their local members, and it talks about fixing the state's finances and supporting local jobs. That was 400 people. The fact is if we do not fix the economy and we do not get the basis of the economy right then everything else will come crashing down around it and a lot more people will be unemployed in Queensland than there are now. There will be a lot more unemployment in Queensland and there will not be business investment in Queensland so businesses will not employ people.

We want to create an opportunity in Queensland. We know if we make the tough decisions now in this budget then we will be providing an opportunity and we will be creating an environment in the future where businesses will want to come and invest in Queensland. But the Labor Party does not get it. If you get the businesses coming and investing in Queensland, they will create jobs and they will employ our mums and dads, our grandmothers, our friends and our family members and then those people will pay taxes and that keeps the economy moving. But the Labor Party philosophy is, 'We've got to grow the Public Service by an exponential amount.' We have had 60,000 extra public servants in X amount of years. Labor believes we just keep borrowing. It never stops.

One of the ministers raised an issue yesterday—and I do not recall it exactly but I will put it in these terms—of this great big rainbow, and that the Labor Party sees this rainbow and thinks there is a little leprechaun sitting at the bottom of the rainbow with a pot of gold. But we know that if you move towards the rainbow and try to catch the rainbow you never quite get there. That is what the Labor Party actually believed.

I have just been reminded of an article in today's *Courier-Mail* about Labor stalwart Theo Castro, who passed away recently. The article said—

Another disappointment was the changing face of those who stood for office for the ALP, once largely the preserve of workers who had to fight to educate and better themselves.

"It's getting so that they practically have to be solicitors to be MPs and it's getting to look that they don't care much for workers," he lamented in an interview in his ALP branch newsletter.

That is the type of old guard Labor Party that I was talking about—the Labor old guard who thinks that the new Labor guard over there is a disgrace and that the modern Labor is not what the old Labor guard represented. They want a change and they voted for a change. We are getting the finances back on track in Queensland.