




Speech by
Jeff Seeney

MEMBER FOR CALLIDE

Hansard Tuesday, 14 February 2012

BLIGH LABOR GOVERNMENT

 **Mr SEENEY** (Callide—LNP) (Leader of the Opposition) (11.20 am): This morning in the parliament we have seen the same old, tired government and the same old record. With the Labor government in Queensland, the music changes but the song remains the same. We see the same denials, the same scandals, the same waste of money, the same excuses and the same promises that will be broken again in the same way. Nothing has changed in the Bligh Labor government over the Christmas break except that we now have two new failures, two new scandals, to go onto the long list of Labor scandals and Labor failures.

It is an interesting exercise to try to pick the top 20 failures of this government. No. 1 would have to be the \$85 billion worth of debt that is costing Queenslanders \$573,000 in interest every hour. Did you pay the interest during question time, Andrew? That is the question: have you paid our interest today? Every Queensland man, woman and child will be paying the interest bill that will be his legacy for generations to come.

No. 2 would have to be the loss of Queensland's AAA credit rating. Queensland is the only mainland state to lose its AAA credit rating. It is not just about the loss of pride; it costs us millions and millions of dollars in extra interest every week of every year that the interest bill is paid. The loss of the AAA credit rating is something that not even the failed Treasurers in New South Wales or in the rust belt state of Victoria could achieve. But Australia's worst Treasurer—our Treasurer, the member for Mount Coot-tha—has achieved that. He has lost that AAA crediting rating and it is costing every Queenslander more in interest every day.

No. 3 on the long list of the Labor government's failures would have to be the failure that surrounds the health department. There are 220,000 people on the waiting list for the waiting list; \$220 million was wasted on the Health payroll debacle that left so many hardworking doctors and nurses without pay; an alleged \$16 million fraud was committed, with money marching out the door that nobody knew about and that nobody took any responsibility for; and there is an \$8 million blow-out on the new Children's Hospital in the Premier's own electorate. Health would have to be No. 3 on the long list of this government's failures. If any reinforcement of that were needed, it would be the scandal that came to light over the Christmas period involving \$16 million of public money that was allegedly embezzled by a fake Tahitian prince. What an absurdity! It illustrates the level of administration to which this government has sunk.

No. 4 on the long list of this government's failures would have to be the spiralling cost of living that has been inflicted upon the people of Queensland by this government's complete incompetence—their complete incompetence when it comes to managing the water and electricity supplies of South-East Queensland and Queensland generally and the way that incompetence has impacted upon the people of Queensland when they go to pay for those essential services every month. I have said in this parliament before and I say it again to the people of Queensland who are contemplating going to the polls on 24 March: take your water bills with you to the ballot box. They are the best how-to-vote cards that the people of Queensland will ever have. Take your water bills. Stick them on the fridge and then take them with you.

Opposition members: And power bills!

Mr SEENEY: Yes, take the electricity bill as well. If you need reinforcement, take the electricity bill with you when you go to the polling booth and put it down beside the ballot paper. Put the electricity bill on one side and the water bill on the other side and do what is the obvious thing that this government deserves. The cost of living that the people of Queensland are struggling with has been inflated by the incompetent decisions that have been made by this government.

After that, the choice is wide for list of the top 20. My favourite is the debacle in the area of transport in Queensland and the disgrace that the Bruce Highway has become after 20 years of Labor government in Queensland. The RACQ has found that three in every five deaths on the Queensland National Highway occur on the Bruce Highway. You only have to drive the Bruce Highway, as thousands of people have to do every day, to know the extent to which that is a disaster. It is a disgrace. The Bruce Highway is a disgrace, and the succession of ministers who have been responsible for that disgrace should hang their heads in shame. In every community along the east coast of Queensland the Bruce Highway is an issue that community leaders raise every chance they get. People are dying needlessly on that road because of this government's incompetence.

The rest of the transport portfolio is no less a debacle. There are issues such as the Toowoomba range crossing. Members opposite should stand at the top of the range in Toowoomba and try to tell somebody that this government has achieved anything over the last 20 years. They should talk to the people in Toowoomba who have to endure the endless stream of heavy transport traversing all of those traffic lights day after day and justify this government's claim of having succeeded in building infrastructure. It is impossible.

Then, of course, there is the Cross River Rail debacle—the pipedream that this government has put out there with no funding and no real plan to address the immediate issues at hand. There is a whole range of other issues, such as the red tape that is strangling Queensland business. The red tape that is a burden on Queensland businesses every day would have to rate amongst the top 20 failures of this Labor government.

I believe that the child safety issue, an issue that has had some prominence in Queensland politics, is still worthy of rating among the top 20 failures of this government. There have been some 7,541 investigations into abuse over more than three months yet to be completed. A record number of 1,200 carers walked away from the system in 2010-11. They are indications of failure in a department that has had an enormous amount of funds provided, but there are no better outcomes for the people who depend on the services.

The law and order issue would also have to rate among Labor's 20 most significant failures. Seventy per cent of Queensland is short of police on the beat. Last year the number of police dropped in 11 police districts. In the last four years around 1,000 experienced police have left the service. Of course, the members who represent the Gold Coast know the extent to which crime has exploded in their areas to the point where it is impacting on the reputation of their area, the state and the tourism industry that they depend on.

These are the things that are a direct result of the failure of this government—the failure in public administration the likes of which Queensland has never seen before. Then, of course, there are the things for which we will be paying for generations: the water grid, the desalination plant and the wastewater plants that stand idle. The Traveston Dam debacle cost some \$600 million, a cost which is written into the water bills that Queenslanders will pay for generations, and led to a great extent of unused land still standing idle in the Mary Valley. The communities have not recovered from having their heart ripped out by that great failure of public policy that was this government's response to a water crisis that they themselves created through their lack of vision, their lack of planning and their lack of commitment to infrastructure.

Anybody in regional Queensland will insist on one failure—one scandal, one debacle—being in the top 20; that is, the debacle that surrounded the amalgamation of their local councils. That ripped the heart out of so many regional communities when Peter Beattie, for base political reasons, set out to attack local government. Andrew Fraser was the architect. Andrew Fraser was the hit man.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SEENEY: The member for Mount Coot-tha was the hit man. The member for Mount Coot-tha was sent out there to do a job on local governments across Queensland, and those regional communities will pay the price for that for generations to come because their heart and soul, the very fabric of their communities, have been torn away. That is the record of this Labor government. That is the record that the people of Queensland will remember on 24 March and they will vote this Labor government into the political oblivion that it deserves.