




Speech By
Hon. Jarrod Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

MOTION: BLIGH LABOR GOVERNMENT, LOBBYISTS REGISTERS

 **Hon. JP BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (12.00 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes the statement of the Leader of the Opposition on 29 November 2012 that 'openness and accountability in government decision making is of paramount importance'; and
2. calls on the Leader of the Opposition to authorise the public release of all ministerial lobbyists registers of the Bligh government.

Nearly four months ago, I issued a challenge to the Australian Labor Party, Queensland division. My challenge was simple; even the Labor Party should understand these words—

It is no secret that the lobbying activity registers that we have in Queensland and the system that was put in place by the former Labor government have been ad hoc and confusing to everyone. What is the point of all those registers when the Labor Party cannot even find its former registers? I find that incredibly difficult to understand as the Labor Party had been in power for the past 20 years and, for a portion of that time, had the Integrity Act 2009 as well as the requirements for lobbyists registers under guidelines issued by Ken Smith, who led the DPC—

of the Bligh government—

at that time. Where have the registers gone under the system that they espoused? In the past seven months they have learned new words: integrity, openness, accountability, transparency. When we ask the opposition to be transparent, it cannot provide the lobbyists registers that it has been keeping for four to five years.

That is what I said four months ago. At that time I challenged the opposition to provide all their registers and their diaries. It is now March 2013 and have they delivered? Well, no! But I can tell honourable members that they have spoken a lot about integrity and accountability, even this morning. However, if they apply the integrity test to their own threshold, they are starting from a very low base. It is so low that, as we said this morning, it is down to the gutters of politics in Queensland. As I reminded members in the motion that I have just moved, on 29 November the Leader of the Opposition said, 'openness and accountability in government decision making is of paramount importance'. Was it of paramount importance for the past 20 or so years when the Labor Party was in government in Queensland or is this new to the Leader of the Opposition? When the Leader of the Opposition sat around the cabinet table for a few years, did she believe in openness, transparency and accountability, or, as I indicated four months ago, were they new words to the Leader of the Opposition?

Not a morning goes by that I do not wake up thinking about the lobbyists registers of the Australian Labor Party, Queensland division. Not a morning goes by that one of my first thoughts are not of the Labor Party and where the registers have gone. It keeps me up at night wondering how a system can be designed in the elements of integrity, openness, transparency and accountability—designed within all of that—and yet those documents have gone. They have vanished from the face of the earth. No-one knows where they are. No-one has seen them. No-one wants to talk about them. Yet the Labor Party wants to talk about this government's lobbyists registers and diaries.

Ms Palaszcuk: Because you're in government. Hello! You're in government. You're in government.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the Leader of the Opposition who says, 'You're the government. You're the government'. For 20 years, they were the government and they were the government that implemented the system that said lobbyists registers must be kept. If they were the government for the past 20 years and they said the systems must be kept under their laws, where are they? It is not good enough to come into this place and say, as the Leader of the Opposition has just done, 'We're not the government any more. We're not the government'. We know they are not the government. We thank the people of Queensland for making sure that they are not the government anymore, because we now have a great state with great opportunities. In all of this, the hypocrisy of the Labor Party is astounding. They set up these laws, they introduced the Integrity Act and they introduced the system where these registers are kept, but now the registers are no longer available to the people of Queensland.

This government is about openness, integrity, transparency and accountability. I would say that this is the most open and accountable government in the Commonwealth. We have introduced new RTI legislation to amend the RTI Act, which means that when an RTI application is disclosed to the applicant it is disclosed to the world at large. Now in our ministerial offices, with every document that is RTI-ed when the applicant receives a copy it is open to the world at large to see the document. If that is not open government, I do not know what is. The Premier is the first premier in this jurisdiction or any jurisdiction in Australia to release diaries. We know that Barack Obama does it and we know that David Cameron and the UK government do it, but the Labor Party can't do it, wouldn't do, never will do it. Even when the Labor Party is in office again in years to come, it will never do it. It will wind back the release of diaries and it will wind back the RTI legislation, because it does not want Queenslanders to know what happens in its offices.

I think the pertinent point is that at the moment we have a royal commission on foot into the health payroll bungle. Who were the ministers meeting with at the time that IBM got the contract? Who were the lobbyists who went to see ministers? Those questions should be answered. Again I invite the Leader of the Opposition to table the lobbyists registers. We will not need to have this debate if, when the Labor Leader of the Opposition gets up to speak in this place in the next 10 minutes, she tables the lobbyists registers and, at the same time, the diaries of with whom her shadow ministers are meeting. She should table it all and put it out in the public. That is what we have done in government. We believe not only in an open and transparent government but also in an open and transparent opposition. They know that when they were in government they were a closed shop. No-one knew what was happening. They are just as closed in opposition, albeit there are a few less of them. They were as closed in government as they are in opposition.

The question is simple: why doesn't the Labor Party want us to see the registers? Perhaps the answer to that comes from Tony Fitzgerald's observations in 2009. Maybe this goes some way to providing the answer to that question. In 2009 he said—

Secrecy was re-established by sham claims that voluminous documents were Cabinet in confidence. Access can now be purchased. Patronage is dispensed. Mates and supporters are appointed and retired politicians exploit their connections to obtain success fees for deals between business and government.

Tony Fitzgerald said that in 2009. Those opposite come in here and float around the Fitzgerald report. Nothing stops them floating around the Fitzgerald report. I can float around this 2009 statement from Tony Fitzgerald, in which he said, in 2009, that secrecy has been re-established in the Australian Labor Party. He did not say that about this government. He said that about the Labor Party and the three amigos sitting opposite were former ministers of a cabinet that was part of that process. Where are the diaries?

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Attorney-General, I will ask you to take your seat for a moment. I appreciate people are getting into the debate from across the chamber, but there are too many interjections. I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: Here is a little insight for members of this House. We RTI-ed the State Archives recently for access to these documents. The RTI officer came back and said that they cannot ascertain where these documents would be and if they did it would take some 66 hours to try to locate the documents. These documents were created under the auspice of openness and integrity and now State Archives, through the RTI officers, cannot easily ascertain where these documents are.

We have also asked the opposition leader to release her diary. The opposition writes back to the Premier saying, 'I'm writing to the Integrity Commissioner about that.' They do not just release the

diaries like the government has done, they have to go off and write to the Integrity Commissioner about these matters.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I rise to a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Attorney-General is misleading the House inferring that I have not tabled my diary as Leader of the Opposition. If he had bothered to look at the tabled documents this morning, we would find that it has been tabled.

Madam SPEAKER: I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: Has the Leader of the Opposition tabled all the diaries of her shadow ministers? Oh, no—‘We don’t believe in full openness and integrity, just a portion.’

Honourable members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order! Attorney-General take your seat. I ask for interjections across the chamber to cease. I call the Attorney-General.

Mr BLEIJIE: The only word the three former cabinet ministers opposite know is secrecy. How can they keep these documents secret from the Queensland public? This House calls on the former government—the three cabinet ministers opposite—to tell us where the lobbyists registers are. Release them so the public can have confidence in the complete system of government and opposition integrity and accountability.

(Time expired)