



Speech By  
**Hon. Tim Nicholls**

**MEMBER FOR CLAYFIELD**

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**MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH, PAYROLL SYSTEM**

 **Hon. TJ NICHOLLS** (Clayfield—LNP) (Treasurer and Minister for Trade) (11.21 am): Of course I rise to support the motion moved by my colleague the Minister for Health and oppose the motion moved by the member for Bundamba. When we look at Labor's failures in Health, they are legion. The Health payroll debacle is but the worst of them. In 2006, in the middle of an election campaign, there was a rushed decision by the former Premier Peter Beattie to establish a new children's hospital. There were no costings done for it whatsoever, but it was used to divert attention from the fact that his health system was falling down around his ears after the scandal that occurred in Bundaberg and his failure to address those matters.

Since then we have had the fake Tahitian prince who walked out the door with \$16 million and we have had a number of other events that have occurred: ambulance ramping, waiting lists blowing out and people being treated on gurneys in waiting rooms and aisles in hospitals. When it came to the health department, under Labor it was not delivering any of the things that the member for Bundamba was talking about. She said we wanted a good system with good doctors treating people. Under Labor it was not a good system; it was not treating people; and it was costing more and more. So the solution of the Labor Party was to throw more and more money at it, and the people of Queensland came to believe that under Labor the health system would never work. That was the reason they made the decision that they made on 24 March 2012, but the Labor remnants in this place still refuse to accept responsibility for the actions of their government. Three of those Labor members are sitting on their front bench here today.

This motion does note the failures of Labor ministers which were not only brought to light by the report provided by Mr Chesterman but also by the report of the Auditor-General into their activities. It found a failure of control, a lack of system strength and a lack of probity, and that was reinforced by Mr Chesterman in his report today. I would also point out that, as always with Labor, you have to check your facts. The amendment to the motion moved by the member for Bundamba has a glaring factual error: it claims the inquiry cost \$5 million. The inquiry came in at \$3.5 million, which is \$1.5 million under budget. So not only do we tell people how much it is going to cost, but we actually do better than we thought we were going to do. The member for Bundamba has been shown up yet again for not being able to represent the truth accurately in this place and for her scaremongering and fearmongering throughout the length and breadth of Queensland.

We have a report from a respected QC which is scathing of what it finds in relation to the activities undertaken by the ministers of the former Labor government, scathing in the activities undertaken by public servants and scathing in the activities undertaken by IBM. Therefore, it is right and proper that this House, as the commissioning agent of that report, has the opportunity to debate it and pass a motion on it, and that is what we are talking about today. When we look at what goes on, we also need to consider the role of IBM in this debacle. I do note that, according to former Premier Beattie's press release in relation to IBM moving here, he was hoping that the company would create as many as 1,000 jobs over the next 10 years. Over 800 jobs had to be created in Queensland

Health—using taxpayers' money—just to keep the payroll system working because it could not function otherwise. Something which was meant to save Queenslanders money by using fewer people actually cost Queenslanders more because we had to employ so many more people just to ensure that people were paid day in and day out. It is entirely appropriate that those who are responsible at the highest level—whether it was the failed Director-General of Health, whether it was the officer from Queensland Treasury who was appointed to manage the contract negotiations, or whether it was in fact IBM itself—be held accountable, because in the private sector that is what would happen. That is what taxpayers expect because it is their money that is being spent. As a result of that there are fewer health services being provided. In just one year alone this government had to put an extra \$124 million into the system. In fact, thanks to the total mismanagement of the previous Labor government we are going to provide an extra \$385 million over four years to keep paying people, and that could have employed 4,000 nurses. This motion deserves to be supported.