




Speech By
Yvette D'Ath

MEMBER FOR REDCLIFFE

Record of Proceedings, 25 November 2014

MOTION

Newman Government, Performance

 **Mrs D'ATH** (Redcliffe—ALP) (5.40 pm): I rise to second this private member's motion this evening. Queenslanders are looking forward to the opportunity to take the Newman government up on the Premier's invitation to hold them to account at the next election. There has been a severe case of nervous Nellies on the other side over the last few weeks. We have continued to see and hear many speeches that sound a lot like valedictory speeches from quite a few members opposite over the past few weeks, and the official valedictories will be delivered this week.

The one thing that we have not seen from across the chamber is the call to accept responsibility for their portfolios by Newman government ministers. The Premier has made his declaration that 'If they do not sort out their problems within two years, at that stage it's not the Labor Party's fault. It's their fault.' The two-year mark has well and truly passed and ministers are still blaming the previous government. It is about time to stand up and be counted, because if they do not Queenslanders will do it for them. Ministers can no longer use the previous government as an excuse for the cuts to government jobs and services.

In the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio jobs have been cut, services have been slashed and specialist courts have been abolished. The slash-and-burn policy which saw government workers lose their jobs at a frightening rate from the very beginning of this government's term of office was a sign of things to come.

The Attorney-General abolished the special circumstances court without even bothering to go and have a look at how it operated. He ignored the advice of stakeholders and did not even take the time to undertake an evaluation of the court. He withdrew \$150,000 in funding to Sisters Inside in Townsville, leaving that service bereft in a city where their services are most needed. He has wasted millions of dollars on a sentenced boot camp for juvenile offenders, despite the warnings and the findings of all the research from around the world that they do work. He abolished the one proven effective method for reducing juvenile crime—the court order youth justice conferencing service.

Another great debacle overseen by this Attorney-General has been the outsourcing of the court transcription services. The cost to consumers has almost doubled. The cost for a day's transcript in the 2013-14 financial year under the State Reporting Bureau was \$1,267.90. In the same financial year the average cost of a day's transcript under Auscript was \$2,189.88. That is a massive increase of 73 per cent.

Not only was the cost to customers massively increased; the cost to government departments saw even greater rises. Under an RTI obtained by the opposition last week, the department wrote that the outsourcing of the recording and transcription services was anticipated to give rise to \$6 million in savings for the department. Instead, additional costs were experienced by the Magistrates Court and QCAT. During the implementation process it was anticipated that these would be \$2 million for the

Magistrates Court and \$170,000 for QCAT. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General was directed to find the \$2 million in savings internally, but no steps were taken to do so.

The QCAT costs increased from the previously budgeted amount of \$60,000 for transcription services to a total cost of \$600,000 for recording and transcription. One of the key cost-saving initiatives that was highlighted in the Auscript implementation was the ability for the judiciary and court staff to access the recordings online through court FM. That, however, according to the department, is proving impractical.

The outsourcing did not go as planned. One of the staff took a phone call from the Attorney-General who was calling to ask how the outsourcer was going in May 2013. It only started in March. Apparently that call was sparked by a conversation with the DPP. The view from the Office of the DPP was that they were not too impressed by the Auscript service and were not inclined to send much more work their way until they sorted themselves out.

Back at the 2012 estimates hearing, when asked about the time frames for the provision of transcripts in criminal trials under the outsourced model, the Attorney-General said—

The government will put a time frame on it. We would expect that we would it more efficient and more reliable and faster than is currently the case offered by the State Reporting Bureau.

This has not been the case, however. There are significant delays. The Court of Appeal has particularly been affected. There are constant references to the delayed transcript issue.

The Court of Appeal in particular had to ask for specific turnaround times, which could not be provided because of Auscript delays. A meeting was held in August last year because 27 Court of Appeal matters were experiencing delays. The Attorney-General is the worst manager of government procurement processes in this parliament and all so he can give millions of dollars of government contracts to LNP donors.