




Speech By
John-Paul Langbroek
MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

 **Mr LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (2.41 pm): I rise to second the amendment to the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. It is my great pleasure to do so when we look at what we have contained in the address-in-reply amendments to the Governor's address, and I will address those amendments throughout my discourse this afternoon. Mr Speaker, I again thank you for your ascension to the role of Speaker. I want to congratulate you for that, as I did yesterday in the motion of confidence we debated.

Following the election and the commencement of the 55th Parliament, I want to thank the people of Surfers Paradise for their faith in me. It is the fifth time I have been elected and I pledge to honour that faith with a relentless commitment to serve my constituents. On the Gold Coast, we had a significant result compared to the overall result. Out of the 12 seats in the region, we won 11 of them, including Sid Cramp in the seat of Gaven and all the other seats that we maintained as well. I acknowledge the government won the seat of Waterford and I want to pay tribute to Michael Latter, who was our former member there. It certainly was a great result on the Gold Coast. I want to thank all of the people on my campaign team. I thank my wife, Stacey, who enjoyed the garden party we had the other day here at Parliament House. I thank all of my campaign team, including my campaign director, Craig Wallace, the people who worked on pre polling, the volunteers we had and my SEC executive.

I came into this place in 2004 having contested unsuccessfully in 2001 when I achieved a personal vote of just over 21 per cent and when there was no prospect of ever winning the seat of Surfers Paradise. It has been very nice to see the result we have been able to achieve on the Gold Coast as an LNP team and to have personally ended up with the safest seat two-party preferred, and I really want to acknowledge that. My honourable colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, has the greatest number of first preference votes on our side, and the same goes for the Premier in her seat on the Labor side. For the first time ever—and I think this is significant—this occurred in a metropolitan seat, along with my colleague, the member for Mermaid Beach, who I think is at No. 6 on the pendulum on the conservative side. When a metropolitan seat has such a representation in terms of the margin, that is something that should be acknowledged, and I want to thank the people of Surfers Paradise and the people of the Gold Coast.

On behalf of the people of Surfers Paradise though, I am very disappointed with the government's lack of plans for my electorate and for the Gold Coast. I also wish to express my concern about the prospect of what plans this government may have for the Gold Coast. When it came to local plans for Surfers Paradise, in Ashmore State School there is a new prep covered area that is being delivered, and that is something I promised before the election. All members on the Gold Coast came together to support Project Booyah, which is a local initiative to help people who are disengaged from employment. I will speak about some of those matters later. That program is now at risk because there is no promise that the current government will actually honour that.

I turn to the law and order provisions, and I know that you, Mr Speaker, have expressed concerns in your role as the member for Nicklin about those law and order provisions. I can assure all members of the House—and all members of the Gold Coast will acknowledge this—that there has been a significant change in the sense of wellbeing for the people living in the suburbs on the Gold Coast who had this sense that other people had taken over our town.

We have the sixth biggest city in Australia, and insidious forces will prosper when people do nothing because most of us do not presume that those sorts of people are out and about and that those are the sorts of things that have taken over our town. It was not just bikie gangs, as the member for Bundamba has asserted; there were nefarious people who were basically responsible for and often associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs, tattoo parlours and massage parlours. It actually implicated a lot of other jurisdictions and other parts of jurisdictions. We have had health concerns, taxation concerns and Federal Police and justice concerns, and those things have changed since September 2013 when that incident happened in Broadbeach that necessitated the legislation that our government brought in.

It is really important for the sake of the safety of families on the Gold Coast that we do not see a winding back of those provisions. I know that the Attorney-General has announced as part of the election campaign that there will be a royal commission into these sorts of events, but those provisions are really important for the safety of people on the Gold Coast—and the perception of safety of people—including things like the tourism economy. For those of us who love to live, work and play there, we do not want to have a return to what happened over so many years where those of us who lived there knew something was happening but no-one seemed to be doing anything about it. That means that it is not just down to our Police Service to be responsible for that. As I have already mentioned, and as we did in government, it is a matter of coordinating a number of different organisations and sometimes jurisdictions to make sure we do not have a winding back of those law and order provisions.

We are also concerned about the significant road and infrastructure plans that we announced during the election campaign, some of which are associated with automatic or Main Roads and Transport planning that will go ahead in my electorate. One example is the widening of Bundall Road, which is an important link between the electorates of Southport and Mermaid Beach to the north and south of my electorate. We are really concerned because those things need to go ahead for a city that is still growing, as everyone knows.

The Commonwealth Games are going to be a significant impost on services, and transport is the most significant issue that the Gold Coast City Council has acknowledged needs to be sorted out so that people can enjoy the experience we know they are going to enjoy. The people of the Gold Coast are confident that we can deliver a great games, and that is now down to the member for Ashgrove, the new Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. I pledge to work closely with the government to make sure that we have a positive atmosphere about the preparations for the Commonwealth Games and to make sure we do deliver. When I was previously the opposition leader, I certainly supported the then Premier Anna Bligh to make sure this would be a wonderful thing for our state and especially for the city of the Gold Coast. It is really Queensland's games and it is important that we deliver those issues, including those transport and infrastructure issues that I have already mentioned.

Ms Jones: I'm happy to work with you.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, I take that interjection. As I have mentioned, I want to support the amendments proposed by the member for Southern Downs, the Leader of the Opposition. I am disappointed that the government used His Excellency the Governor on such a significant occasion as the opening of the parliament to politicise what should be the clear direction of the Labor government. It could and should have been done with much more grace. So much for the noble and lofty sentiments expressed in this House by the Premier and Deputy Premier just two days ago at your election and again yesterday about how they intend to conduct business.

Having seen question time this morning, to my mind we have gone back to the publicly magnanimous but privately snide era of the former member for South Brisbane, Anna Bligh. On Wednesday, our new Premier said on the radio that Queenslanders are tired of combative politicians and they want people to work together. I say that we should not look at what they say; we should look at what they do. The tone of the government was set by the nasty vitriol directed at the former government contained in the Governor's address.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you to cast your mind back to Her Excellency the former Governor Penelope Wensley's address to the 54th Parliament in April 2012. For those who want to question this I would ask them to go back and look at that address, which was a considered oration on the very

clear direction of the LNP government. We set out exactly what we were going to do. It was not a political statement of our beliefs, and I felt dismayed at the lack of courtesy shown to His Excellency in asking him to present such a speech in contravention of the conventions of parliament. Notwithstanding its contents, it was amazing because of the things that were not mentioned. We have already heard that there was no mention of agriculture, no mention of trade, no mention of mining—or if there was, it was a cursory one—no mention of transport—

Mrs Frecklington: And no mention of roads.

Mr LANGBROEK:—and no mention of roads. I take the interjection from the member for Nanango. It reminds me of the lack of grace exhibited by the Deputy Premier on 31 January, election night, while appearing on Channel 9 where the member for South Brisbane was so insufferably smug, gloating and maintaining the diatribe of the campaign. The votes were in and there was no need to continue the campaign rhetoric. There were several assertions contained in the Governor's speech which require clarification, and the first is the ALP government's determination to reinstate the Skilling Queenslanders for Work programs.

I am the first to acknowledge that we never said they did not work. We never said that the analysis by Deloitte was not valid. What we did say was that we could not afford to duplicate the federal government's responsibilities at a state level. When I became the minister the cupboard was bare. There was a contribution of \$100 million a year by the state government, and the federal government was responsible for those employment programs. I do not deny that when I was on the other side we knew that they were programs which were valuable. Today the government quoted from a letter that I wrote to my colleague, the Leader of the Opposition, acknowledging the people we met in Goondiwindi who are delivering programs such as Get Set for Work and Skilling Queenslanders for Work. The important thing for us to also consider is that Skilling Queenslanders for Work, and for disengaged children Get Set for Work, are programs that had to be developed because of the former government's lack of performance in the roles of education and training. There was a need for programs such as the ones that we brought in. We were giving money directly to schools to stop children from being disengaged. That is why the former government's solution was to bring in Get Set for Work and Skilling Queenslanders for work, neither of which guaranteed people jobs. I am the first to acknowledge that they are good programs, and this government now has a mandate to introduce those programs. We have heard a number of claims, one of which is that they are going to create 32,000 jobs. Those are the sorts of things that we will now be monitoring. They are the facts about Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

I have had discussions and written to federal members of parliament and ministers who were responsible for employment programs to say that it was their responsibility. As I recall, the only other state which was delivering programs like Skilling Queenslanders for Work or Get Set for Work was South Australia back in 2012 or 2013, and it was to the amount of about \$6 million. We had inherited a situation where the cupboard was bare, and when we were trying to right the Queensland economy we could not in all good conscience spend \$100 million on programs for which the federal government was responsible.

We have always said that Treasury told us Queensland's fiscal position and outlook was unsustainable and that restoration must be an urgent priority for the 54th term of parliament. Today, in response to my query whether they would commit to the three fiscal surpluses forecast by Treasury, the government said that it was only Peter Costello and the Commission of Audit who recommended that the fiscal balance should be the one that we looked at and not just the operating balance. I know that it can be complicated for people to understand the difference. Basically, the simple answer is that it was not just Peter Costello who recommended that in the Commission of Audit; it was also Doug McTaggart and Sandra Harding. I think it is a terrible thing for the Treasurer and the government to be questioning the Commission of Audit because they are also then impugning the character of people like Sandra Harding, Doug McTaggart and all of the other people who worked on it—especially because the incoming Treasury brief confirmed their advice.

Ms Trad: Just table the brief!

Mr LANGBROEK: I take that interjection from the Deputy Premier. They can table their brief. Why don't they table their brief? I know it is in there, they know it is in there, and the important thing is that they can table their brief now. We did the responsible thing. We reined in spending in a fiscally and socially responsible way whilst maintaining front-line services, and there is no better example of that than what we do with the TAFE system. If you listen to those opposite, TAFE is the only way that people can receive training. TAFE is an outstanding example of a training system which has been around for 130 years, but the important issue is that we inherited a system that was withering on the vine. When I became the minister we had very low utilisation rates. TAFE had over 20 facilities that

were either unfit for purpose, blocks of land or they were already for sale, which also calls into question what are the assets, what are the 'significant' assets and what are the 'major' assets that the government will no longer contend are the things that they said they were during the election campaign.

When we were in government we set up a Skills and Training Task Force to recommend a way forward for vocational training because students were voting with their feet. Across the nation, students and their parents were saying that whilst the public provider is valuable, it is not the only place where they wanted to receive training. We brought industry in—because it is industry which provides the jobs—and they said that because of the lack of flexibility that TAFE could provide in terms of the hours it was open and the courses that it was providing, students were going to other places for training. When you are the training minister, students are your customers. This meant that there would be a diminution of people going to TAFE, so TAFE was withering on the vine. At the South Bank TAFE, our flagship campus, the utilisation rate from six o'clock at night was five per cent. Everyone knows that originally TAFE was night school. Who would have thought that you would have a utilisation rate of five per cent for something which should be used to help people get another qualification or to upskill or reskill. We inherited utilisation rates across the state which were, on average, 40 per cent. We do value TAFE, which is why we took it out of the department. We decided that we should not be spending more money on administration than on teaching, and that was happening with the hundreds of millions of dollars in training that was in my department—

Mr Hinchliffe interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: I take the interjection from the member for Sandgate, who had responsibility for employment in the Bligh government. We wanted to stop spending more money on administration than training, and that is why we have now have a TAFE system that is set to be part of the contestable funding pool. I would like to mention the wonderful people from the Ashmore TAFE who I have met in my electorate of Southport. We have opened a brand new TAFE facility with corporate logos and a real sense of wanting to show what TAFE can deliver in a contestable market. That is as a result of signing up to a national partnership with federal Labor ministers. There may be dinosaurs on the other side who say that TAFE should only ever be what it has been for 130 years, but I dealt with a number of federal ministers because of the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd governments who had us sign up to a circumstance where there was going to be contestable funding. As occurred in Victoria, funding should not just be opened up to people who rot the system. I note that that happened under a Labor government, which opened up market contestability too quickly and without any checks and balances. We must ensure that, if we have students who want to receive the training that they need to get the real jobs that industry says they will provide if you give us the right training and the right students, we also need to ensure that students can get those qualifications across the state and not just at TAFE. There are more students at TAFE than at every university in Queensland combined. There are over 180,000 students in TAFE. As a result of our reforms we have seen utilisation rates go up.

It is important to acknowledge that in my time as minister I always wanted to make sure we had more of a horizontal equalisation, between starting with a diploma or certificate and going all the way through to a PhD, and educational qualifications that meant that the educational pathway was something you could jump on and jump off depending on your life circumstances—starting a family, coming back to work or changing your job for example. In this generation, my children, who are 24, 22 and 17 are not going to do the same job forever. At times they will want to get different qualifications. We wanted to make sure we committed \$615 million a year for a VET investment plan to fund training in high-priority areas. It is wonderful to provide training that does not lead to a job. It is not so wonderful if you are the person getting that qualification. Of that \$615 million, \$134 million was for TAFE.

Under our stewardship TAFE has come to life. Go to TAFEs around the state and you will see occupancy now up to 60 per cent, heading to 90 per cent. In the time available to me it is really important that I acknowledge that we did many things in the time we were in government in the area of education and training. I am very proud of what I was able to do in what I believe is one of the most positive portfolios in the government. There are many other things I would like to address. All I can say about this government is that it has come to government without a plan. It is now making it up as it goes along. We want to make sure that we work for the purpose of the good governance of this state. Whether it is to do with assets or other things, we want to make sure that we hold the government to account for the things it has promised. We will hold it to three surpluses, no debt and no increase in taxes—making sure it can provide all those things under the magic pudding formula that the Deputy Premier is such a specialist in.