



Speech by

Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH, PAYROLL SYSTEM

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (5.55 pm): I support the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition that condemns the government's ongoing failure to properly pay Queensland Health workers their proper salary and entitlements and calls for the urgent creation of a commission of inquiry that will investigate and report on the failed payroll system. As the months pass since the ill-fated 'go live' of the IBM contracted SAP Workbrain computer system and the extent of the Health payroll fiasco unfolds, it is interesting to explore the history that led to this preventable cataclysm that is still wreaking havoc on so many workers' lives.

While the Premier beats her chest and says that she will punish those who are to blame and while the Minister for Health cops most of the flak, another of the key culprits has managed to hide under the radar. The Minister for Public Works—or should that be the 'Minister for Public Waste'—who usually puts on a brash vaudeville performance in the parliament as the head court jester, has been noticeably silent while his own Labor government has allowed health workers' wages to be robbed from them for six pay cycles and still counting. Normally one to jump vigorously into the fray to defend workers' rights, the minister has been as quiet as a mouse while health department staff desperately try to pay their bills. The minister has been too busy hosting rooftop parties for bureaucrats and going on jaunts to Germany to pay attention to what is happening in his own department.

In 2005, a 10-year contract for German software company SAP was renewed by Premier Beattie without going to tender, which outraged local IT vendors. As I was told during the estimates hearing last year, the target of whole-of-government consolidation has now changed to the retaining of multiple systems—four or five payroll systems and two or three finance systems. Changing the terms of the IBM contract would, one have thought, incurred more money. However, in September last year, when I asked the minister if these changes would cost more, he said—

We have a budget that we were given at the start and we will keep to it. We were given the project and we were given a budget and that budget will stand.

I wonder if the minister still stands by that comment. In January 2008, a four-year contract for SAP, and awarded to IBM, was signed. In July 2008, Public Works took over CorpTech and the SAP, HR and finance program from Treasury, supposedly to consolidate whole-of-government systems. Of course the minister is no technical expert. No-one who has met him would question that. But if you are inheriting an entity, that being CorpTech, that had spent \$400 million over four years between 2004 and 2008 with no result, would you not be asking questions? Was the minister not in the loop? Where was Minister Schwarten, the honourable member for Rockhampton? Was he aware of this breach of contract? These questions would be thoroughly dealt with in a commission of inquiry.

But what about the minister's chief adviser, Chris Cummins? He was probably too busy changing factions so that he could run for the federal seat of Fisher. Why is this minister not paying attention? If the minister is not responsible then who is? He seemed to know the answers in estimates—or did he? The director-general ended up having to answer most of my questions.

Labor's scheme for a whole-of-government payroll and human resource system was bungled from the start. The minister has claimed that no planning was ever completed for the rollout of the program to new agencies and that all the future planning had been deferred since the Queensland Health payroll fiasco. This Labor government has overpromised and underdelivered. How much more money has been wasted on this minister's watch and how many more workers will be robbed of their hard-earned pay? Queenslanders deserve a commission of inquiry to get some truth on this inexcusable and terrible situation.

Bad administration by inexperienced employees was poorly overseen and allowed to continue under Minister Swarten. He and the health minister are still in denial. Pretending to be clueless about workings in his department—a department he has headed for more than a decade—pretending to have no responsibility for projects he ultimately signs off on, will not wash this time. The Minister for Public Works and Information and Communication Technology cannot avoid the truth for much longer, a truth that health workers who have been denied proper pay deserve.

Decent people who have worked on this project tell me that this payroll system will never—that is, n-e-v-e-r—work. Other departments are on hold, being propped up by ageing Legacy systems because of lack of leadership. One person said that the only thing the new Health payroll will do is make a lot of people rich. This person said that a year ago.

What is the real cost of this unforgivable bungling by two incompetent ministers and their deceitful Labor government—the personal cost and also the financial cost? We cannot begin to comprehend the stress, uncertainty, depression and anger felt by those caught up in this debacle. As a former nurse I wish to add my disgust at the way this government has handled this avoidable disaster. I support the motion of the LNP before the House and encourage others to do so.