



Speech By
Hon. Jann Stuckey

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

MOTION: QUEENSLAND HEALTH, PAYROLL SYSTEM

 **Hon. JA STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games) (11.41 am): I rise to support the motion moved by the Minister for Health. Three years ago in this House I said that 14 March 2010 has gone down as a day of one of the worst government failures in Queensland's IT history and cast an undeserved cloud over it. And here we are, in August 2013, and the Hon. Richard Chesterman AO QC has tabled the Queensland Health payroll commission of inquiry report that found—

The replacement of the QH payroll system must take a place in the front rank of failures in public administration in this country. It may be the worst.

But we should not be surprised that Labor presided over such a massive fiasco, as the writing was on the wall and now is there for all to see in black and white. The Labor government had been unsuccessfully attempting to introduce a whole-of-government HR system since 2002. However, it is the scale of the Health payroll failure that really beggars belief, as does the misery and heartache it created for thousands upon thousands of dedicated Queensland Health workers. Yet those opposite, true to form, want to whitewash the whole sorry saga and the people who were so deeply affected.

For a bit of history here though, Minister Robert Swarten inherited a pup from Treasury on 1 July 2008, that is for sure, when his department was tasked with managing the contract to deliver the new Queensland Health payroll project. But that does not absolve him from responsibility—quite the opposite—nor his director-general, Mal Grierson, who has received a dishonourable mention in the recent Health payroll report as he had been in the position for over a decade. IBM had been in breach of the managed contract since August 2008—under Swarten's watch. There was an expectation that systems would be replaced by the end of the year, but nothing happened, with another missed deadline at the end of 2009.

On 17 September 2009 Minister Swarten told parliament that the proposed rollout in Queensland Health would cost \$20 million and that there was no extra money, but within three months Queensland Health admitted it would ditch the existing system and spend \$40 million to replace it—double the amount this incompetent minister claimed. Today's cost is estimated at \$1.2 billion. How on earth did it come to this? Mr Chesterman and the LNP have endeavoured to find out. On 7 December 2009 I criticised the Bligh government for six fruitless years of failure to deliver whole-of-government IT solutions and announcing yet another IT overhaul. I said at the time that Minister Swarten's solution to disguising uncompleted projects appears to be that when one plan fails he just announces another. Flip-flopping and changing directions without registering that it would cost money were typical of that government.

On 13 December 2009 I put out a release titled 'IT failures a sign of things to come', and how true that turned out to be! I predicted no pay for public servants and other issues after Queensland government offices were crippled by ongoing internet failures. Move to 21 December 2009 and the government's confused tender process posed serious questions about the impact it was having on the delivery of important projects and, beyond comprehension, it was only signed in 2008 yet generated 1,086 pages of requested contract changes. Each time a deadline approached, the government had

to come up with more excuses to push back the go-live date and, once it did, with problems that are well documented now, there was no guarantee that the subsequent pay runs would run glitch free. This was an understatement of mammoth proportions and gave us a chilling glimpse of what was to come—all in all, 10 aborted attempts and 4,200 defects identified, many of those prior to go-live.

There were countless FOIs which unravelled a lot of cover-ups, ineptitude, incompetence and misleading comments. On 25 March Swarten said—

I am extremely proud of the outcome ...

this is 25 March after it had gone live—

of combined Queensland Health, IBM and Department of Public Works in delivering such a good outcome in a complicated environment.

He tried again to defend the ill-fated program on 14 April—

Nothing that has come to light has suggested a breakdown in the system.

It is no wonder that this minister will be remembered as the 'Minister for Public Waste'. His awful legacy will live on. He typifies Labor governments—big on promise but incapable of delivering no matter the cost to the taxpayer and incapable of an apology. Labor deserved the boot in 2012, just like Rudd deserves it on 7 September.