

**Statement by Ashley**

I was born on 25 January 1935, the youngest of five. At age 14 I started an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner. At age 20, I married by beautiful wife Patricia. We moved to Southport, Queensland where I started work with Keith as a leading hand carpenter. When work dried up in Southport, we moved to Brisbane with Keith and I worked as a leading hand carpenter on the Odeon Picture Theatre and other contracts.

I found it difficult to bring up five children on a carpenter's wage so I formed a partnership with another carpenter and we started building 'labour only' in the Brisbane and near west areas. We would have built at least 2000 houses in Brisbane, Tara, Dalby etc. Most of the contract houses were design plans and construct. As I was good at trade drawing, I was very adept at designing, drawing up construction plans and building. In 1960 the bottom dropped out of the building industry due to drought and poor management of the government of the day.

At 32 years of age, I moved my family back to Brisbane where I acquired work as a major construction general foreman with Keith again. The downturn worsened in the building industry so I applied for and won the job of Trade Instructor with Queensland Prison Service. After serving my three months probationary period, I was appointed to the position of Trade Instructor HM Prison, Brisbane. I was instructed to design and construct a 500 capacity rotary dairy complex, complete with underground 30ft deep silos and feed stalls. After this contract was completed at Wacol Prison, I'd had enough of governments and government departments. I left the Prisons Department and applied for and was awarded a job with McDougall-Ireland as a Major Construction High Rise Foreman.

Before the end of Enoggera Army Camp build up I was promoted to Construction Supervisor for Brisbane. Whilst with McDougall-Ireland, I carried out construction of Amberley Air Base in preparation for the arrival of the F111 fighter bomber. I built the most modern electroplating complex in the world at that time and an F111 workshop and engine test complex envied by the Americans.

I was promoted to North Queensland Construction Manager stationed in Townsville where I constructed most of the university complex as well as contracts including hospitals from Cairns to Townsville. Due to the immense responsibility of work and family I became depressed and decided to move my family to Mount Isa where I set up as a building contractor.

In 1972 at the age of 38, I started up a form set company with a couple of Victorian partners and we did very well for several years. However Keith, a major contractor of the Civic Centre went bankrupt and caught us for \$16 000. We managed to pay our bills and folded the company in 1975.

I got a job with Transfield, Mount Isa as Line Supervisor in charge of excavation and laying of the major pipe line from Mount Julius Dam to Hilton Mine. We finished ahead of schedule. On completion I moved back to Mackay and set up in Civil Engineering with Cyril Golding on the Sugar Shed complex at Mackay Harbour. I carried out all my own surveying and completed this contract ahead of schedule. On completion I took over the construction of concrete syphons to the irrigation channels at Eton which I also completed ahead of schedule.

When Goldings ran out of work in Mackay, rather than travel, I started work with Engcon Civil Engineering. I carried out a sewerage complex and swimming pool in Middlemount, swimming pool in Sarina and supervised work all over the Mackay District. One developer, Allen of Brisbane named streets after my wife and me in Andergrove. Engcon then won electrification widening work to the coal line from Hay Point to Peak Downs Mines.

On 8 February 1985 I was engaged in electrification widening to a coal line cutting north of Jilalan Coal Terminal. I was checking a grader final cut to the cutting when the grader blade hit a submerged rock and as it spun I had to jump to avoid contact with the machine. I fell about 20 ft and my right ankle and back were severely damaged in the fall. The doctors and specialists all stated I could never work again. I stayed off work for one month and returned to work. It took six months of extreme pain to convince me I could never go back to the building industry again.

In 1996 I was granted an Invalid Pension. In August 1996 due to the stress of my current situation and the lack of concern of the Keating Government, I suffered a massive heart attack. Thanks to Emergency at the Mackay Base Hospital, I managed to pull through but I needed an immediate quadruple bypass.

Due to the razor gang slashing of the Goss and Rudd State Government, I was put on a waiting list for a quadruple bypass. Eighteen months later I could not walk 50m without chest pain. Twice I was flown to Brisbane during the 18 months and twice I was sent home when my operation was given to a private patient.

In desperation I went to Mackay Base Hospital and after the Superintendent examined me, I was not allowed out of hospital. I was flown to Brisbane's Prince Charles's Hospital and operated on the next morning by Dr . Please take note that, while we have wall to wall Labour State Governments and a combined 80 billion state debt, how can we expect any other result than 'non-performance' of their political position bordering on criminal neglect; jobs for the boys like Anna Bligh's husband cover up; of murder like the Patel case (harbouring a criminal and paying Patel's airfare to America); and the holidaying politician who built a mansion in Taiwan while on State payroll. How many patients have died in Queensland to provide our State Government's way of life, jobs for the boys, etc?

In July 1999 I had my second massive heart attack; my chest cavity filled with blood and I was classified as 'critical'. I was flown by Flying Doctor to Brisbane's Princess Alexandra Hospital and placed in an induced coma. After 2 ½ weeks, I was eventually brought out of the coma. My update on health at this stage is: two crippled legs, 1 crippled left hip causing constant extreme pain, insomnia, emphysema, severe reflux and sugar diabetes. My first heart attack caused massive damage to the top of the heart and my second heart attack caused irreparable damage to the bottom of the heart. My lung capacity has dropped to 35%. I therefore cannot ever be anesthetized again for any form of operation.

In early 2002 I had to travel to Brisbane to have a detached retina to my right eye operated on. The operation took three hours and I had severe chest pain at the end; they had to administer heart spray through a drip. My left eye bled and I lost all sight to that eye before bleeding was stopped. Twelve months after the retina operation to the right eye, bleeding started again. My loss of sight was so severe, eye specialist Dr , declared me legally blind.

Early in 2005 an aneurism formed in the junction of the aorta and leg arteries. Dr , Townsville Vascular Surgeon requested an immediate 'stent' operation. My wife and I travelled to Townsville by car and I was admitted and operated on immediately. To fix the 'stent' to the artery, a bypass graft was performed on the left leg artery into the right leg artery.

Six months later an infection occurred adjacent to the bypass graft. I was admitted again to Townsville Hospital and the infection was cut out (75mm diameter x 38mm depth). I spent six weeks in the Townsville Hospital and was treated with antibiotics and a special 'vac' machine for open wounds was used.

Mackay Allied Health was contacted by Townsville Hospital Triage for transfer to Mackay. On the following Wednesday morning, Mackay Base Hospital was contacted for transfer arrangements. Mackay informed Townsville the bed was available, the 'Vac' machine was available BUT travel was not available, even though Mackay Hospital had NO Vascular Surgeons and even though I filled out travel forms from the Base Hospital. I was informed that I would have to find my own way to Mackay, even if the trip could kill me as a delay in getting to Townsville in the first place would have definitely cost me my left leg.

I arranged for my daughter-in-law to travel from Proserpine to Townsville to pick up my wife and me and drive to Mackay. We arrived in Mackay at 6pm with a dressed open wound (3" x 1 1/2") in my groin, hurting like hell and with severe chest pain indicating a heart attack in progress. I must comment at this stage your new federal Labour Party is proving by their recent budget debacle for pensioners that they are cut from the same role of bungling, bureaucratic, impassionate excuses for federal and state politicians. The so called 'Future Funds' Federal Labour is skiting about is already null and void by the irresponsible acts of their State Government partners in crime.

My wife and I received a carer's pension in 2002; it has recently been stamped with 'blind'. At no stage during the coalition government did we, as carer and patient, doubt we would get the carer's payment. Have a look at the travelling we have had to do to receive some sort of treatment; the accommodation, meals and wear and tear on our vehicle.

Anna Bligh our State Premier pays \$30 per night for accommodation and 15c per kilometre. That is equivalent to what we got out of your Budget – NOTHING. For the 5 1/2 months Federal Labour has been in power they have formed so many investigative institutions that office space in Australia is running short. Well I guess that is what they formed the 'slush fund' for.

On 11 March 2008, Kevin Rudd not only agreed to pay the carer allowances by the 30 June 2008, he also agreed to either pay as future payments in another government stream or cash payment to the extent that no pensioner will be 'one dollar' out of pocket. On 19 May we were informed by your Treasurer that our payments are 'one off' payments. This statement was condemned by Labour as being unfair; so we can now add unfair to Federal Labour repertoire. ~~WHY CAN OUR DISCUSSION BE A LITIGATION CASE BY RIGHTS~~

My medical condition has been termed terminal by hospitals and private doctors. How many more terminal pensioners are you driving to an even earlier death with your bureaucracy? I sincerely hope no voter will ever vote Labour after reading this statement. My father was staunch Labour; I respect him for that but these Federal and State Labour Governments seem to be hell bent on wrecking the country.

The Coalition has regularly provided person to person meetings with politicians however the Labour Government seems to place themselves above the people they promised to govern. I'm yet to see the Government honour their numerous pre-election promises, in particular, the promise that pensioners will be much better off under a Rudd Government. After 5 1/2 months we are still waiting – we are definitely worse off according to Coalition figures. To give pensioners and carers peach of mind, ACT NOW!

Ashley