

Bligh attacks De Lacy over mining laws

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Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has criticised former Labor treasurer turned mining company director Keith De Lacy for complaining about her government's mining approval process.

She said his criticism was predictable.

"Keith De Lacy is someone who is now working for mining companies so it's no surprise he, like other companies, would like to see short-cuts on assessment. We're not going to do that," she said.

"Queenslanders would like to see the economy grow but they want to see us get the balance right. The environment matters, and it is always going to be part of our approval process."

The government has introduced legislation to streamline mining approvals but it will not be voted on this week, the last sitting week of Parliament before caretaker conventions begin on Sunday.

Ms Bligh said the Labor government would always strike a balance between development and the environment.

With the economy likely to emerge as a key issue in the March 24 poll, a peak business group yesterday released its election wish-list and nominated cutting red tape as one of the top priorities for any future government.

Mr De Lacy has criticised the Bligh government for having a "compliance culture" in its dealings with business.

Liberal National Party leader Campbell Newman attempted to boost his economic credentials yesterday by saying he would overhaul payroll tax and regulations if he won the election.

But the leader did not provide any details on what changes would be made to payroll tax in Queensland, which already has the lowest rate in the country.

"We take this very, very seriously. It is an inefficient tax, it's anti-growth and we are taking that on board," he said. "All I can say is 'watch this space' during the campaign."

He later admitted it would not be financially possible to scrap payroll tax altogether. The tax contributes about \$3.5 billion a year to the state government, about one-third of all state taxation revenue.

Meanwhile, Bob Katter's Australian Party said it would slash payroll tax if it gained power. Queensland leader Aidan McLindon said the threshold for businesses paying the tax would be lifted from \$1 million to \$2 million, and accused the two main parties of ignoring small business.

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Queensland Premier Anna Bligh speaks to the media in Brisbane on Monday.

Photo: Glenn Hunt