



Speech by

**BILL FELDMAN**

**MEMBER FOR CABOOLTURE**

---

Hansard 27 August 1998

**FORDE INQUIRY; MR H. HEILPERN**

**Mr FELDMAN** (Caboolture—ONP) (Leader of the One Nation Party) (6.31 p.m.): Let us not mistake One Nation's intentions in the Forde child abuse inquiry: we wholeheartedly support and commend the inquiry into child abuse and the sickness that pervades this abomination. But let me make this clear: we support such an inquiry only as long as it is a truly independent inquiry, a clean inquiry, an open inquiry, an up-front inquiry and an honest inquiry. The people of Queensland ask for nothing less. The Honourable the Premier promised—pledged—to One Nation, this Parliament and the people of Queensland that the Forde child abuse inquiry would be an independent inquiry. The Premier will recall that he made a pledge when answering a question without notice from me.

Mr Premier, let us be blunt: did you mislead this House when you made this pledge and when you said—

"In terms of staff ... that is entirely a matter for the inquiry itself. It is a matter for Leneen Forde. We will not interfere in that as a Government and that means the Minister will not either. Under the Act it is impossible for us to interfere."

But, Mr Premier, I have here in my hand a copy of a press release issued by your Families, Youth and Community Care Minister on 13 August this year which may have caused you some angst. The Minister announced the appointment of Hans Heilpern and Dr Jane Thomason. She said Mr Heilpern holds a number of judicial appointments on review tribunals and was in charge of community services in New South Wales in the early 1980s. She goes on further to say that she is confident in the ability of this team to get the job done.

Mr Premier, there appears to be a very serious conflict of interest here. You declared that Leneen Forde will select her own staff but your Minister does not agree. Obviously she has already selected her staff, which you claim is the responsibility of Leneen Forde.

**Ms BLIGH:** I rise to a point of order. The honourable member is misleading the House. The Governor appointed Mrs Forde, Mr Heilpern and Ms Thomason. I did not. Mrs Forde does not have the power to appoint commissioners.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr FELDMAN:** Mr Premier, you have led us to believe that by allowing Mrs Forde to select her staff the inquiry will be independent. However, your Minister, by selecting the staff, has guaranteed that Leneen Forde will be a captive of that staff. This means that we do not have an independent inquiry. I would like to hear your thoughts on this matter. Your Minister is obviously operating on a different wavelength from you.

You promised the public of Queensland that this inquiry would be independent and impartial, but the sum total of the debate today has been around the incompatibility of the Minister's selected team and your professed high standards and testimony to independence. This whole affair is of grave concern to us, the only true independents in this House. Why is this so grave? Because it is tainted with doubt and suspicion! It is tainted with suspected political interference and party political complicity and duplicity. Mr Premier, you talk of a high game but you are getting a very low score. It appears that you do not want this inquiry and you are prepared to scuttle your own ship with unwanted baggage, with suspect appointments and pledges that you are not prepared to keep.

**Mr BEATTIE:** I rise to a point of order. I find those remarks offensive. They are untrue. I seek for them to be withdrawn.

**Mr FELDMAN:** I withdraw them. One Nation has no confidence in Hans Heilpern as assistant commissioner and the Premier now knows why. Only the Premier can clear up this confusion. Mr Premier, with all the human resources you have in Queensland, and with a desire to lower Queensland's unemployment rate to 5%, why do you employ Hans Heilpern from New South Wales? Are you going to lower New South Wales's unemployment rate also? The Wood royal commission associated your appointee, the former director-general of Youth and Community Services—YACS—New South Wales with these public sins: a disbelieving and disparaging attitude towards complainants; disinclination to accept that any officer would engage in wrongful conduct; a concern as to the possible scandal that could arise from the police or any external agency being brought in to investigate the matter; and a readiness to penalise any officer or employee who reported possible misconduct by a fellow worker.

Is this culture all-inclusive to the Labor Party both here and in New South Wales or is this culture endemic in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care? We leave it to the Premier to come forth with an explanation—a rational explanation, an explanation devoid of rhetoric and grandstanding, and an explanation that is believable in our present environment.

---