



Speech by  
**Mr DENVER  
BEANLAND**

**MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY**

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Hansard 27 August 1998

**FORDE INQUIRY; MR H. HEILPERN**

**Mr BEANLAND** (Indooroopilly—LP) (6 p.m.): I move—

"That this House, whilst affirming its confidence in Mrs Leneen Forde as Commissioner of the Inquiry into Government and Non-Government Institutions and Detention Centres, expresses its lack of confidence in the appointment of Hans Heilpern as Assistant Commissioner and calls on the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care to recommend to the Governor-in-Council that his commission be revoked immediately."

The Forde inquiry is a very important inquiry. It will give the victims of child abuse an opportunity to tell their stories. It is an inquiry in which the public must have the utmost confidence. It is a very sensitive inquiry and it is of great importance to the victims and to their families. The Opposition supports this inquiry and has done so from the outset. Unfortunately, the Government has already let the victims down.

The appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as an assistant commissioner to this inquiry is of great concern to those who want to see justice done and to those who subscribe to the principle of good government. When it comes to his suitability to serve on this inquiry, Mr Heilpern has three major failings. First, he is a former director-general of a department criticised by the Wood royal commission for failing to deal with the things he is now being paid by the Queensland Government to investigate. Secondly, he was sacked as director-general of this department for a lack of leadership and for implementing what have been described as bizarre policies. It just became too hot. Thirdly, he has a history of political activity and mismanagement during the term of his employment by a Queensland Government authority.

The Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care has stated that she wanted to ensure the integrity of the Forde inquiry. The Minister has also claimed that a rigorous approach to finding Mr Heilpern was taken. Give us a break! How could a rigorous approach have unearthed someone of the calibre of Mr Heilpern? How could a rigorous approach ignore the damning evidence of the Wood royal commission? How could a rigorous approach ignore the damning nature of Mr Heilpern's very public dismissal from the position of Director-General of the New South Wales Department of Youth and Community Services? It is quite clear that no rigorous approach was taken.

The Minister comes into the Chamber and tries to pretend to members of this House that she has undertaken a lengthy search and has carefully checked out Mr Heilpern's background. Neither the CV distributed with the commission of inquiry terms of reference nor the Minister's media release, which set out other information, contained any reference to the fact that Mr Heilpern had previously been employed in this State by the Government. No reference was made to his term in the Building Services Authority. What a shameful cover-up! What was the Minister out to hide? There is no use shaking your head, because you are guilty—guilty of neglect and guilty of having failed dismally.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! The member will address the Minister by her correct title.

**Mr BEANLAND:** The Minister is guilty of neglect and guilty of failing to undertake proper research in this matter. As for a rigorous approach—what a joke that is on the people of this great State of ours! There was no rigorous approach adopted whatsoever. Far from it! Every attempt has been made to hide the fact that Mr Heilpern was previously employed in this State. No mention was made of a connection with the Queensland Building Services Authority. Nor did the Minister mention his role as

political adviser to a former New South Wales Minister. I thought she would have had pride in that, but she conveniently did not mention it. It is marvellous what you left off.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! "What the Minister left off".

**Mr BEANLAND:** Yes, it is marvellous what the Minister left off. In comparison with others, the CV of Mr Heilpern was very short. It is quite clear that that CV was cut down to show only the points the Minister wanted shown. That suits the Minister fine, but it does not suit other people.

Yesterday on radio the Minister indicated that she had written to Mr Heilpern asking for a response to the allegations raised by the Opposition. Today in Parliament she asked the Opposition to provide any further information it had relating to Mr Heilpern. Over the last couple of days there seems to have been developing a lack of confidence in Mr Heilpern, although the Minister stood in this place two days ago and said that she had every confidence in him. I would have thought that any rigorous approach would have enabled the Minister to state quite emphatically today and yesterday that she had confidence in her appointee, but suddenly she has gone to water.

The Minister has also tried to cover up Mr Heilpern's previous employment with the Queensland Building Services Authority. Surely it is not unreasonable to expect that the Minister's press release detailing the qualifications of the commissioners would contain at least a reference to Mr Heilpern's prior relationship to this Government. It is clear why the Minister would want to cover up Mr Heilpern's past.

It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern was sacked as director-general of his department in New South Wales! It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern is on the record as saying that it is damaging when people get the impression that people who assault their children are some sort of monsters! What sort of rigorous approach was taken in relation to this matter? It is not quite bad enough that Mr Heilpern managed the department vigorously criticised by the Wood royal commission! Any cursory glance through the royal commission report would have brought that to light. Clearly the Minister did not go through that report to see the repeated attacks made on the department for its approach. So much for this rigorous approach taken by the Minister in searching out this person!

Mr Heilpern's association with the QBSA would have to be the last straw. Let us take a close look at the QBSA. Mr Heilpern was appointed under questionable circumstances and he was a complete and utter failure as a manager. He was apparently appointed to the QBSA after interview questions were faxed to him by no less than a person closely associated with the former Goss Labor Government. There is also a suggestion Mr Heilpern was very close to allegations of harassment of QBSA board members.

Mr Heilpern's service with the QBSA has drawn mention in this House on previous occasions. A quick search of Hansard would have provided the Government with all the information it needed about the suitability of Mr Heilpern for this inquiry, yet the Minister's rigorous approach did not extend even this far. In her haste to appoint a mate of the Labor Party, the Minister left many stones unturned. The appointment of Mr Heilpern, a former Labor ministerial adviser, to this position is a disgrace and a great disappointment. I think it is a great disappointment to the people of this State. The victims of abuse in Government and non-Government institutions and detention centres deserve better.

We now have an undermining of the inquiry. Labor is undermining the good work of this inquiry before it even gets started. There will be a lack of public confidence in this inquiry as a result of the actions of this Minister. This is a very sensitive inquiry in which the public needs to have the utmost confidence. How can anyone have confidence in that inquiry after referring to the Wood royal commission?

Right from the outset this side of the Chamber has rigorously supported the following up of child abuse claims. The former Government established the office of the Children's Commissioner. This inquiry is the next step. A large number of complaints were phoned in to the office of the Children's Commissioner following the establishment of a hotline. We now see the next step, which is a fully fledged royal commission. It is important that there be every confidence in that royal commission. The Minister is undermining that commission and the good work that will be undertaken by it and its chairman. The victims deserve better.

Time expired.

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