



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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FORDE INQUIRY; MR H. HEILPERN

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.41 p.m.): The Forde inquiry into child sexual abuse and the abuse of children is one of the most important inquiries we have ever had in this State. Tonight members have a responsibility to make sure that everything about the inquiry is absolutely impeccable. We have a responsibility to the children of yesteryear, the children of now and the children of the future. We fully support this inquiry. One could say that the qualities of the commissioner and the assistant commissioner, Dr Jane Thomason, are absolutely impeccable.

This Labor Government has put forward a name that no-one else in Australia who had been involved with the YACS department of New South Wales during the 1980s would touch with a 40-foot pole. Anyone who read media reports at that time would know that that department was racked with controversy throughout the eighties. It was renowned throughout Australia for its mismanagement and controversy. Why on earth would this Government pick anybody—regardless of anything else—who was associated with the YACS department of New South Wales in the 1980s? Then we had the final icing on the cake with the Wood inquiry, which was damning in its report of that particular department.

No other State in Australia, no other Cabinet and no other Government would have done this. We already have impeccable people on the inquiry: the former Governor and Dr Jane Thomason. It is absolutely essential that public confidence in this inquiry is 100%. Further down the track this is going to be one of the most sensitive inquiries that this State has ever seen. It is likely to be a lengthy and prolonged inquiry. Let us hope that it is all for the good of the children. But why on earth would that particular commissioner have been put forward? Did those Cabinet members know that man's full background? I am sure that they should have. Mr Mackenroth and Mr Beattie would have known, because they were part of the debate that was held here on, I think, 28 April 1994, when the member for Aspley was raising matters in relation to the Building Services Authority. Those members would have known that there was some controversy in the background. Surely the Minister would have put forward in the Cabinet documents the man's full background. Surely she would have said to her colleagues, "Look, this is likely to be controversial. This may lack public support, because the particular department in New South Wales that he managed during the 1980s was notorious for its controversy and the public criticism of it." Surely that would have been the first decision to make: to put aside anyone who had been associated with that particular department.

There has been a fishy smell about some of the operations of the Labor Party going right back to the Heiner documents. Many people in Queensland wonder why those documents were shredded.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr HORAN: The matter related to possible defamation action against witnesses. It could have been dealt with quite easily by validating legislation. Many people wonder why there was not simply validating legislation to put that particular worry aside so that the Heiner inquiry could continue. But the Labor Government shredded those documents. Now the Labor Government wants to put a Labor mate right up there in that inquiry as a tunnel of information so that it can manage it.

Proper consideration has not been given to this appointment. I do not believe that the Minister has adequately and properly informed her Cabinet colleagues in the documentation and the advice she gave them in order to make this appointment. If she had mentioned all the things that have been

mentioned in this Parliament this week, there is no way that the Attorney-General would have supported this appointment. Did the Attorney-General or his department scrutinise this particular selection? If he did, he did not do a very good job, because none of this would have happened and that man would not have been selected.

This appointment will be on everybody's conscience. If it is to be an impeccable inquiry, everybody here—members of all parties and the Independents—will have to make a decision tonight to make sure that Queenslanders have absolute faith in this inquiry—absolute, total, 100% faith—for the benefit of our children, the children of yesteryear and the children of the future. The way in which this has been handled by the Minister has been incompetent from the start. All that is happening tonight is that her colleagues are trying to support her because of the mismanagement that has occurred. There is no way in the wide world that they could have supported this decision if they knew what we have been able to tell them this week.

Time expired.
