



Speech by

**Mr M. HORAN**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

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Hansard 16 September 1998

**MR SPEAKER'S RULING**

**Motion of Dissent**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.59 p.m.): I second the motion.

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (8.30 p.m.), continuing: Having seconded the motion moved by the Opposition Leader, I reiterate what he said. Mr Speaker, this motion of dissent is about correcting a decision which we believe was made by you having not heard all that was said in the particular interchange that occurred.

This incident occurred during question time, while we were discussing the appointment of Mr Hans Heilpern as an assistant commissioner to the child abuse inquiry. It was quite a heated exchange, but it is quite clear, particularly from the Hansard record, that what was said by the Premier was "your behaviour", and he pointed and indicated the Opposition Leader. It was quite obvious that he had put his feet in the molasses and so he added, "The Opposition's behaviour here is supporting the child molesters and the abusers." He knew that he was on the sticky paper and he tried to get off it.

Mr Speaker, tonight we are about making sure that you provide us with the correct ruling. This can be compared with a footy match. The referee of a football match does not see everything. He does not see all the cheap shots. Sometimes it takes the video to pick up the cheap shots that occur in back play.

The Premier just could not cop what was happening that day. He was exposed for what the Labor Party was endeavouring to do in appointing this particular assistant commissioner to the inquiry. I think it is a disgrace to the Labor Government that, I believe, Mrs Forde was not advised that this particular person was to be appointed as assistant commissioner.

**Mr Beattie:** How do you know that?

**Mr HORAN:** I understand. I remember saying in a debate later that week that what the Labor Party wanted was a tunnel of information into this particular inquiry and that this was quite disrespectful to the absolute integrity of the commissioners appointed to that inquiry. During question time the Premier accused the Opposition Leader of "protecting"—

**Mr Beattie** interjected.

**Mr HORAN:** The Premier said "your behaviour". Then he added, "The Opposition's behaviour"—he knew that he had got it wrong; he knew that he was in strife—"here is supporting the child molesters and the abusers." I do not think that in normal circumstances any of us on this side of the House would jump up and ask for an apology or for a retraction of those particular comments, but when the Premier went on to say, "The Opposition's behaviour here is supporting the child molesters and the abusers", it became a very serious matter.

The Premier was accusing the Opposition Leader of supporting the child molesters and the abusers. I do not think a more serious accusation could be made in this House. I do not think anybody in this House, whether they be on the Government or the Opposition side, would stand for that sort of a taunt or accusation. It absolutely lowers the tone of this House. Here we see the Premier, day after day, theatrically talking about open and accountable government and about not standing for lower

standards, but the first thing he does when there is a bit of pressure on, when the blow torch is applied to the belly, is come out with this accusation and comment.

I do not think there would be one person in this House who would not object to a comment like the one made by the Premier. We on this side of the House wanted to ensure that this important and sensitive inquiry got off on the right foot and that everything about it was absolutely correct and had 100% integrity, yet this sort of accusation, nonsense and lowering of public standards was thrown at us.

Mr Speaker, this is not a censure motion; this is a dissent from your ruling. We recognise that in the hurly-burly of that particular morning there was a lot of hubbub and noise. We can understand that it would be pretty easy to not pick up particular words being said in a heated exchange, but there is no doubt whatsoever that that day the Premier said "your behaviour" and pointed at the Opposition Leader. That is the point the Opposition Leader raises. He wanted that reference, which he found insulting, untrue and unparliamentary, scrapped from the record. The Premier refused to do that.

No doubt the Premier had a bit of a burr under the saddle. He did not like what was being debated that particular morning. He realised that he had put in place an inquiry into child abuse to which he had appointed an assistant commissioner who was a Labor mate. I have no doubt whatsoever that he wanted a tunnel of information to that inquiry so that he could maintain the maximum amount of management and know what was happening for his own benefit. I have absolutely no doubt about that whatsoever. That he would try to turn that around by making the accusations he made that day is disgraceful.

Mr Speaker, all we seek tonight is the correct interpretation of what happened. As the Opposition Leader has said, we believe that you have been fair to both sides of this House. We believe that the incident that occurred that particular day could easily have not been heard by you. We say that quite sincerely. We have no doubt that, had you heard and been well aware of the Premier's actions—saying "your behaviour" and pointing to the Premier and following up with those other comments—your ruling may have been different.

**Mr Fouras:** You're getting a bit repetitive, Mike.

**Mr HORAN:** I can keep on going for another three minutes. I have heard the honourable member for Ashgrove be fairly repetitive at times. All we seek tonight is a correct adjudication of this matter. We know what has been reported in Hansard, we have seen on the television what actually occurred and we physically saw the accusation being made by the Premier. We look forward to a very objective and clear decision on this particular matter tonight.

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