



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOORROOPILLY

Hansard 24 March 1999

MR G. GUEST

Mr BEANLAND (Indoorroopilly—LP) (11 p.m.): Some weeks have now passed since Minister Bligh tabled in this House a report dated October 1998 by Sydney based consultant Mr Peter Daffen in relation to Petford Training Farm (Aboriginal Corporation). This report contains a number of unfounded and untested allegations that smeared Mr Geoff Guest, the operator and manager of Petford. At no time prior to the report being tabled in this place had Mr Guest been given an opportunity to reply to these wild allegations.

On more than one occasion, Minister Bligh has risen in the Parliament to belittle Mr Guest and abysmally attempt to justify her feeble ideological opposition to his work. It is of concern that it would appear that most if not all of the allegations made by the Minister thus far are without foundation or substance. For example, I refer to accusations about abuse. It is my understanding that allegations of abuse at Petford have repeatedly been investigated by the police, but that is not what the Minister would have us believe. The fact that not one of those allegations has been substantiated would no doubt be of little consequence to a Minister who has not even made the effort to visit Petford and witness first-hand what this is all about.

At no time has Mr Guest been given natural justice. We hear a great deal from Labor members opposite about natural justice when it suits them, but at other times—such as this—the concept is treated with abuse. I ask: how would members opposite like it if such unfounded allegations were made about them and then were given credibility by being tabled in the House as part of a report, yet they had no opportunity to reply to the unfounded allegations? The report contains not one but a whole range of allegations that cover a period and relate to matters such as theft, child abuse and children receiving burns from ropes. Most of those matters have been investigated at length by the police over a considerable period and on no occasion have the police seen fit to lay charges. The investigations have obviously found the allegations to be unfounded. Nothing has ever gone to court in relation to these matters. Despite this, a report is tabled in the House without the person concerned, Mr Geoff Guest, and his wife Norma having an opportunity to reply to the matters that it contains. It is very unfortunate.

In view of the report being tabled—and I understand why the Minister might want to table the report—and in view of the fact that it contains so much detail of untested and unfounded allegations, there must be an opportunity for the person concerned to be given the right to reply. In this case, the person concerned has been given no right of reply. Without that, he is seen to be guilty of the offences. People do not go further to see that the allegations are unfounded and untested and have never been to court. In fact, they do not see that the allegations have been investigated and have been proved to be unfounded or that there has been a lack of evidence. Whatever the case might be, certainly none of the complaints was proceeded with by the police.

Having the allegations tabled in the House has not only affected Mr and Mrs Guest personally, it has also affected the funding that the centre receives. It is fair to say that Mr Guest could now face financial difficulties—it would be little wonder if he did not. Having worked tirelessly for the benefit of over 2,000 young people for the last 20 years, he is now treated in a disgraceful fashion by the Government. If Government support is withdrawn, I am sure that Mr Guest would have every right to feel betrayed.

Minister Bligh has not only sought to ridicule Mr Guest in this Parliament but she has also sort to ridicule the bio-neuro feedback treatment at Petford. I checked the service agreement that was tabled with the report in the House by the Minister. The service agreement that was signed by her own department of Families, Youth and Community Care and the Petford Training Farm (Aboriginal

Corporation) authorises counselling services and rehabilitation programs, including bio-neuro feedback programs. The very programs that have been ridiculed in this place are contained in the service agreement that was signed by a departmental officer. Again it is little wonder that Mr Guest feels betrayed, because the Minister's own department gave approval for this type of treatment at Petford. The question then has to be asked: was Mr Guest wrong to be doing what he was authorised to do by the department?

In my mind, there is no question about Mr Guest's integrity. In fact, the whole situation is a disgrace that has been perpetrated not only on Mr Guest but, importantly, on the hundreds—indeed, thousands—of young people who have been fortunate enough to go through the Petford Training Farm.
