



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOORROOPILLY

Hansard 27 April 1999

CHALLINOR CENTRE

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (11.29 a.m.): I would like to acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of Mrs Sandie Rodgers and other members of the Challinor family. These people are here to express their disgust and concern over the way in which Minister Bligh and other members of this Labor Government have broken their promises to many of the former residents of the Challinor Centre in Ipswich.

In Opposition, Minister Bligh had a lot to say about the Challinor Centre. In fact, in Opposition, if there was a television camera around, Minister Bligh had a lot to say about a lot of things. There is no doubt that many people in the community, particularly the disabled community, looked forward to the day when Minister Bligh would start delivering on her promises and start turning her rhetoric into action.

Unfortunately, after 10 long months in Government, many people are still waiting for this day and many more are now waiting for the Minister to stop making excuses and to start finding answers. There are thousands of people throughout the State who are getting sick and tired of being told by Minister Bligh why she cannot do what she has promised. The Challinor family is just one group that has been continuously misled and deceived by this uncaring and opportunistic Minister.

Ms BLIGH: Mr Deputy Speaker, I find the comments offensive and I ask them to be withdrawn.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr D'Arcy): The Minister finds the remarks offensive and requires them to be withdrawn.

Mr BEANLAND: In deference to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw.

In less than three weeks after coming to office, the Minister canned once and for all the planned relocation of former Challinor residents to a new purpose-built facility at Chuwar. At the same time, the Minister also promised as a matter of priority to construct permanent accommodation in the Ipswich area for a maximum of 24 former Challinor Centre residents. That was on 15 July last year, and it was a promise that accompanied an offer from the Minister to provide contracts to those families wanting written assurances of the intentions of the Government.

I will now detail what Minister Bligh has achieved in the nine months that have passed since this very public commitment was made to the former residents of Challinor and their families. Has construction of a new facility commenced as a matter of priority? No! Has a site in Ipswich been selected? No! Does the Minister have any intention of keeping her promise to find a suitable site in Ipswich? No! The Minister has not even delivered on her promise to provide written contracts to families. In nine months, Minister Bligh has broken just about every one of her promises to the Challinor family.

However, most hypocritically, the Minister has temporarily relocated former Challinor residents at the Basil Stafford Centre, despite previously moving a motion in this House that called, among other things, for that facility to be closed completely by December 1998. Most damningly in relation to this matter, it called for the provision of a range of alternative accommodation and support services for residents of the Basil Stafford Centre that were at least equivalent to those being offered to the residents of the Challinor Centre in light of its sale to the University of Queensland. On the one hand, on 29 April 1997—exactly two years ago this week—we have the Minister calling for the Basil Stafford Centre to be closed and for its residents to be housed in facilities equivalent to those proposed for Challinor residents, yet on the other hand she is the very Minister who is keeping Basil Stafford open.

Ms BLIGH: The shadow Minister is misleading the House. Our Government allocated \$11.5m for anybody who wants to relocate from the Basil Stafford Centre.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Is the Minister calling for a point of order?

Ms BLIGH: I say that it is offensive. He is misleading the House and I ask for his allegations to be withdrawn.

Mr BEANLAND: I am not sure what the allegations were. The point is that the Minister is debating the topic. She has not honoured her commitment to these people. Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to you, I withdraw.

Since the Minister wants to enter into this debate, I say that she has plenty of opportunity herself to speak. She has not seen fit to do so nor has she found the time to answer the people of Challinor herself in a public forum. Earlier in April, she ran away from having a meeting with the families. She does not have the courage to go out and face them. However, she wants to try to make some petty political point in this Chamber. I make the point that all the interjections in the world by the Minister will not get over the fact that she has failed those people appallingly and now she has come into this Chamber to try to score a cheap point. No points of order, which are not really points of order, will wash in this particular issue.

Of course, the Minister will try to argue that she has not been wasting time and that she has at heart the best interests of the former Challinor residents. However, I doubt very much that Minister Bligh will be prepared to stand up and admit the real reasons why she opposed the development of a facility at Chuwar. I just wonder why she did that. After all, what interest could possibly be served to Minister Bligh's political future if she were to stand up and admit that her opposition to developing the site at Chuwar was based solely on party polling and the need to bolster support for the two Labor members in the Ipswich area who, as we know, faced serious——

Ms BLIGH: The suggestion is offensive. It is untrue.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Minister, if you are going to rise, under Standing Orders you have to——

Ms BLIGH: I rise to a point of order.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I will listen to a point of order.

Ms BLIGH: The allegation is untrue, it is offensive and I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr BEANLAND: Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to you, I withdraw. Mr Deputy Speaker, I point out that it is in deference to you, because Minister Bligh is endeavouring to debate the issue through points of order and interjections. As I said before, she is not prepared to come into the House and speak. Mr Deputy Speaker, in deference to you, I will certainly withdraw.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: If it comes up again, I want the comment withdrawn straightaway.

Mr BEANLAND: Yes, I did. Mr Deputy Speaker, I do most clearly withdraw in deference to your good self.

It is this type of duplicity, this type of opportunism that undermines the credibility of Minister Bligh and causes real concern about her intentions. If all this is not enough proof of the abundance of rhetoric that has been gushing from the Minister's office since the Beattie Labor Government came to power, then the fact that the Minister has spent only 6% of her capital works budget must raise even greater concerns. More than anything, this failure to make decisions to get on with the job of delivering promises points to the fact that Minister Bligh is too busy playing games and factional politics to worry about concentrating on the issues of real importance to her portfolio, such as the relocation of former Challinor residents, which impacts directly upon the quality of life and wellbeing of sensitive and vulnerable Queensland residents.

What about the member for Ipswich? Where has he been throughout this entire debate? I dare say he has been ducking for cover. The State Treasurer, a man of considerable political influence and someone whose support could easily tip the balance in favour of the Challinor community, is trying to pretend that this is not an issue. I say to the Treasurer that this is an issue and it is being played out in his own backyard. I wonder what attitude the Treasurer would have adopted if the people in his electorate who were being victimised and misled by the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care were local miners or railway workers? I am sure that he would not cop that for a moment. In fact, I suspect that the member for Ipswich would have been jumping up and down in caucus and jumping up and down in Cabinet to ensure that Minister Bligh did not get away with her ideologically driven, contrite and duplicitous behaviour. Unfortunately for the Challinor family, the people whom they represent are not miners and they are not railway workers. To the Minister and the Treasurer, the former residents of Challinor are just pawns in a game that is all about making one person look good while saving the seats of others in Parliament.

Ms BLIGH: I rise to a point of order. Again, the allegation is offensive, it is untrue and I ask for it to be withdrawn unequivocally.

Mr BEANLAND: I withdraw.

The Minister did not even have the decency to attend a meeting that was convened to discuss this matter. Members can only imagine the dismay and disenchantment that was caused when the Minister advised at the very last moment that she would not be attending a special family meeting that was scheduled for Saturday, 10 April 1999. Minister Bligh has made it very clear that she will not be proceeding with the construction of a facility in Ipswich, because the Minister says that a suitable site cannot be located. However, the problem is that suitable sites have been found, but whenever it comes time for the Minister to bite the bullet and make a decision, she moves the goalposts. Most recently, the Minister ruled out building on the third proposed Ipswich site located at Ripley because she deemed it unsuitable for a variety of inaccurate and ill-informed reasons. I understand that among the reasons for vetoing this site, which was endorsed by the families, the council and the neighbours, the Minister cited a lack of public transport and isolation. I am informed that the site is only four kilometres to six kilometres from the Ipswich CBD and that the likely residents of this centre could not use public transport even if it were available. The Minister is becoming very desperate and, unfortunately, has resorted to making up absurd and outrageous excuses to try to justify her desire to break the promises she has made repeatedly to the Challinor family.
