



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard 9 March 1999

PETFORD TRAINING FARM

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (7.15 p.m.): Last week, the Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services tabled in the House the Petford Training Farm report of October 1998 prepared by Sydney-based consultant Mr Peter Daffen. This report is clearly a character assassination of Mr Geoff Guest and his wife, Norma. The report, which contains a number of unfounded, untested allegations, smears Mr Guest, the operator and manager of Petford. Many of these allegations had been investigated by the police who, upon investigation, took no further action.

The Minister, in the process of tabling the Petford report, indicated that she, the Minister, had relied upon a number of departmental and police reports. Yet again, none of these reports—without identifying particulars of the young people—has been tabled in this House. Clearly, what we have here is a situation in which Mr Guest, having been afforded no natural justice whatsoever in this matter, has certainly had his character assassinated by this process. Mr Guest is a hardworking Queenslander who received the Order of Australia in recognition of his services to Aboriginal youth and the Petford Training Farm for Boys. In addition, he received the Paul Harris Award from the Rotary Clubs of Cairns and has been praised by judges for his work with those with behavioural problems that led them to commit offences.

These are things which we should not forget. It is very important to remember that Mr Guest, who has an enormous amount of practical experience and is highly motivated, has adopted a very commonsense approach to the problems of young people with behavioural problems who have offended against the State. Yet we have a situation in which someone who has done a tremendous amount of work for our community is suffering from a character assassination contained in this report. Mr Guest is not university trained in behavioural issues, nor does he possess an accounting qualification. Therefore, Labor does not believe that he is appropriate to do that work. However, he has life skills—wonderful life skills, in fact—and a rapport with the type of young persons who have been sent to Petford with behavioural problems that have led them to commit offences.

I call on the Minister to reconsider and provide further funding together with appropriate services for Petford. I say this because, after all, it is well known that Mr Guest has for some time been asking the department to supply a bookkeeper. Unfortunately, those who took on that role did not remain at Petford. In recent times, no-one was supplied to do that sort of work.

It should be remembered that Petford is a former station in the far-north Queensland hinterland, in rugged terrain and outback living conditions. It can hardly be compared to a city lifestyle and modern, comfortable capital city living. I think that we sometimes forget this when we talk about a place such as Petford. It is not some comfortable suburban household around Brisbane, the capital city. Petford is, in fact, in the rugged terrain of the hinterland of far-north Queensland. I have been there—unlike the Minister. I went there some time ago. I understand that Minister Bligh summoned Mr Guest to Cairns to see her some weeks before Christmas. Yet the Minister has not made the effort to visit Petford herself. That is a great shame. Should she do so, she would see that it is vastly different from the sort of establishments one might find around this city.

Over 2,000 young people have passed through that facility for a range of offences, including petrol sniffing. It is little wonder that it has received such rave reviews from so many people. From the comments of local Labor members, in fact, it is obvious that they have no confidence in their own Government and the Minister on this issue. I notice that, according to an article in the Cairns Post, a number of them have tried to distance themselves from the Minister on this particular issue. There is quite a lengthy article, in fact, in relation to this matter.

Dr CLARK: I rise to a point of order. The member is misrepresenting our position. Local members have indicated quite clearly that the Minister had to act on the information she received.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BEANLAND: I will read what the member said in the Cairns Post in a moment. But if the member is supporting it, that is fine. If the member for Barron River is saying that she is against Petford and supporting the Minister, that is fine by me—whatever she wants to say. I want to get back to my speech, though. Clearly there has been no natural justice. I am glad to hear that the member for Barron River has now stated her true position. It is not what was portrayed in the Cairns Post.

Dr CLARK: I rise to a point of order. Again my position has been misrepresented by the member. I have made it very clear that I acknowledge the contribution Mr Guest has made but I support the Minister's action.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr BEANLAND: The member cannot bring herself to decide which side to support. The Minister ought to resign.

Time expired.
