



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL

MEMBER FOR LOGAN

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CHILD ABUSE; FORDE INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (6.42 p.m.): Having heard the contribution of the honourable member for Broadwater, I can understand why motor racing drivers are forced to wear helmets. The Parliament should welcome the report of the commission of inquiry into the abuse of children that has been released by Commissioner Leneen Forde. It is an outstanding document containing 42 recommendations.

Today I pay tribute to the work carried out by Commissioner Forde because I think, at long last, those people who have been suffering—in many instances suffering in silence—have at least had a chance to have their say on what for them is a deeply emotional and personal issue. Hopefully those people can begin the long process of recovery from the trauma they have experienced and emotional scars they may carry.

Whilst Commissioner Forde made 42 recommendations, one of the recommendations she did not make was to establish an independent special implementation unit such as the one proposed by the Opposition tonight. In August the Government will announce its response to the Forde inquiry. I will deal with how we have got on so far in relation to inquiries into the abuse of children.

The coalition has a sad track record when it comes to these sorts of inquiries. It started off with the attempt under the Cooper National Party Government to set up the Heiner inquiry. What a shambles that was. The witnesses were not even indemnified. We have heard the Opposition, and we have just heard One Nation, variously trying to make political capital out of what was an incompetently set up commission. It has got to the stage that we have had now 11 inquiries—11 different reviews of National Party Government complete incompetence—and those opposite are still going on. We have heard it tonight.

I say to my friend from Broadwater: to settle your mind down, why do you not have a "national Heiner day" where those opposite can all get together, sit out on the lawn with their shredded wheatmeal biscuits and talk about nothing but Heiner? He could do that once a year. That way we could save a lot of money and put all those resources into the children—in this case the victims of child abuse—and we will all be better off. The member for Broadwater can then move on and tell us about the criminal allegations of his former staff member.

When the Beattie Government was elected it undertook to inquire into the abuse of children, so a commission of inquiry was set up, headed by esteemed former Governor Leneen Forde. One would have thought the Opposition would be pleased to have such an inquiry. Instead, we had three days of vicious smear and abuse against assistant commissioner Mr Hans Heilpern. We had the Opposition trying to knock over the assistant commissioner at the very beginning of the inquiry—a slimy smear campaign to damage him and the Forde inquiry, trying to nobble it from the outset.

Then, when some difficulties with trying to access information from the department were discovered, rather than help the inquiry to get the information it needed we found that the Opposition—the member for Indooroopilly was back again, for a second time—was frustrating and nobbling by moving a disallowance motion so that 250,000 documents that the inquiry wanted could not get to it. Now, with the release of the inquiry report, what do we find? We see further nobbling by the member for Indooroopilly, who now wants to set up another commission! How many commissions

do those opposite want? Is it just a mechanism to park all of the failed preselected Liberal Party candidates?

How much taxpayers' money has to go into a commission instead of front-line services to help people? That is what the Forde inquiry recommended—more money for front-line services. We are trying to avoid that extra bureaucracy, rather than frustrate the recommendations.

The fact is: the Government has been able to achieve what it has to date in spite of the blockading tactics, the nobbling tactics, over the years by the Opposition and the nobbler from Indooroopilly. This is his third time lucky. He is a serial nobbler. The children of Queensland can thank their lucky stars that the member for Indooroopilly did not have his way, because if he had there would have been no inquiry, no report, no recommendations and no improvements to the system. With his proposal tonight, there would be less money to implement any recommendation from the Forde inquiry. That is why the motion should be rejected. The amendment moved by the Minister should be applauded by this House.

The Government has a plan in place. It will be responding in full in August. I urge the House to support the amendment moved by the Minister and to reject out of hand these nobbling tactics.
