



Speech by

**Hon. K. LINGARD**

**MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT**

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Hansard 21 July 1999

**CHILD ABUSE; FORDE INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Hon. K. R. LINGARD** (Beaudesert—NPA) (6.27 p.m.): Probably the greatest catalyst over the past few years in respect of the attention paid to dealing with child abuse was the appointment of the Children's Commissioner. There is no doubt that the appointment of the Children's Commissioner arose from a motion from the then Opposition in respect of which the member for Capalaba and the member for Ashgrove suggested the appointment. There is also no doubt that they had admitted that it was impossible to appoint a Children's Commissioner under a previous Government. There is no doubt also that a Children's Commissioner presents a Government with a great deal of difficulty. That is because it is an independent body which seeks not only funding for offices and personnel but also seeks increased powers for dealing with and finding out about the circumstances of children. There is also no doubt that the present Government experienced such difficulties, given that a special regulation had to be brought in for the Forde inquiry.

The most important aspect of this is that, for the first time, we had an independent person to whom complaints could be made and who could refer those matters on for investigation and monitor what happened to reports. There is no doubt that it is because of that initial work of the Children's Commissioner that the present Government continued with the Forde inquiry.

**Ms Bligh** interjected.

**Mr LINGARD:** The Minister is interjecting. However, indirectly I am paying the Government a compliment in respect of the Forde inquiry. However, I am concerned about the implementation of the 42 recommendations of that inquiry.

In relation to the Burdekin report on homeless children, there is no doubt that those people within the department who were intent on deinstitutionalisation, and who took the attitude that there should be absolutely no institutions within our society, embarked on a program of total deinstitutionalisation that affected disabled people, mentally ill people, young people and other people in institutions.

Therefore, we find within the department an attitude that they will implement a program of removing all sorts of institutions simply because in reports such as the Forde inquiry report we found some sort of institutional abuse. One of the most typical ones is BoysTown at Beaudesert, at which the previous Government was funding more than 84 children. Let me say to all members of this Parliament that this Government pays for 84 people to be at BoysTown and undergo a program of complete rehabilitation with education programs—all sorts of programs to fit in with their requirements. We as a Government paid for 84 people in that particular program. At present at BoysTown there are only 31 students.

In the Department of Families we find that those people who agree with deinstitutionalisation, who do not want a program such as BoysTown implemented, will not—through the court system—recommend to a magistrate that young people go to an institution such as BoysTown. They call it an institution. Quite honestly, I do not believe that it is an institution. However, it is certainly something that fits into the framework of institutions. Therefore, the people within the Department of Families are adamant that they will not support or recommend a program such as BoysTown. So we find the ridiculous situation—an absolutely absurd situation—in which this Minister is paying for 84 people at BoysTown but using only 31 positions. That is something that I think we should look at,

especially when it comes to the implementation of the recommendations of the Forde inquiry. Similarly, I could talk about Piabun, the black BoysTown at Woorabinda, and Petford. I know that this report refers to Petford.

I would say to the Minister that she should look at the programs that were implemented at Petford when it comes to child abuse, and she is using the concerns of child abuse to stop a program such as the one at Petford. The important thing about that program is that it had the complete support of the leaders of the Aboriginal communities in the cape. All those communities supported "Old Man" and all communities supported Geoff Guest, and those people who went through the program at Petford certainly benefited. There is no doubt that "Old Man" Guest had problems with his administration. "Old Man" Guest was not concerned so much about money, but he implemented great programs for Aboriginal children through that particular program.

Time expired.

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