



Speech by

Hon. M. FOLEY

MEMBER FOR YERONGA

Hansard 16 September 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Ms J. Macdonnell

Hon. M. J. FOLEY (Yeronga—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for The Arts) (10.07 a.m.), by leave: I join with the Premier in condemning the member for Clayfield for his slandering of directors-general of this Government. On Tuesday, I made a statement in this House to correct scurrilous and baseless allegations about the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which focused on a senior officer employed there by the previous Government. Today I correct even more offensive and baseless allegations, this time by the member for Clayfield, against the director-general of my department. So thick is the hide and the head of the member for Clayfield that he cannot remember the consequences of the last time he wrongly accused Ms Macdonnell of being a Labor crony. Let me remind him.

In 1991, the member for Clayfield alleged that Ms Macdonnell's appointment from a legal firm to the new position of Executive Director of the Office of State Revenue was the appointment of a crony from the Labor Lawyers Association. When both Ms Macdonnell and the Labor Lawyers Association strenuously denied that she had ever been a member of that organisation, and the Courier-Mail was about to report the falsity of his allegation, the member for Clayfield made this statement to the House on 20 August 1991—

"I got three people wrong: Mr Peter Carne, Ms Mary Miller and Ms Jane Macdonnell, who is the Executive Director of the Office of State Revenue."

He went on to say—

"To those three people in respect of whom I genuinely believe I made a mistake, I unreservedly apologise."

He went on to say this—

"I will not use this place as a coward's castle."

How times have changed!

The member for Clayfield has no problem using this place as a coward's castle. To my knowledge, Ms Macdonnell has no association of any kind with the Australian Labor Party. I do not know her politics. I believe that to be irrelevant. That is why I have never sought, as a Minister, to interfere in any way with the advancement of persons whose politics differed from my own.

The facts are that Ms Macdonnell responded to a public advertisement for the vacancy in the Queensland Treasury in late 1990 and was selected by a committee of strangers. Five years later, as a stranger to me and two other committee members, she was the successful applicant for the position of director-general of my department. One of the four selection committee members was the then president of the Queensland Law Society, Ms Julie-Ann Schafer.

Ms Macdonnell's previous tenure as director-general was short because the previous Government, in which the member for Clayfield was a Minister, did not allow her to serve it. Not one director-general employed by the coalition Government was a woman. Unlike her immediate predecessor, Ms Macdonnell has no party or personal connections with the Attorney-General.

My counterpart in Victoria certainly had no spurious objections to Ms Macdonnell being employed within her portfolio. A Liberal Premier, Jeff Kennett, whose personal approval is required for a

public servant to be paid a performance bonus of more than 15% of the maximum 20%, approved for Ms Macdonnell a bonus of 18% for her performance as a general manager at Victoria Legal Aid.

This Government is proud to have Ms Macdonnell's services. We want people like her who are prepared to challenge the way things are done and uphold standards of conduct—people who strive to continuously improve services within available resources.

Ms Macdonnell has established her credentials over almost 25 years of service with Federal Governments of both political persuasions, the private sector and two State Governments of different political persuasions. Her experience encompasses all aspects of corporate services, the delivery of welfare services, involvement in law enforcement, tax administration, private legal practice and legal assistance.

When the member for Clayfield makes such vitriolic attacks on public servants he should be ashamed of himself. I consider it an honour to work with someone of Ms Macdonnell's eminence and I refute utterly the member for Clayfield's vile and cowardly attack upon her reputation. I think Shakespeare must have had the member for Clayfield in mind when he spoke of slander "whose edge is sharper than the sword, whose tongue outvenoms all the worms of Nile". Mr Santoro's serial slandering is an utter disgrace and an abuse of the privileges of this House.
