



Speech by

**PAUL LUCAS MLA**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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**CHILD ABUSE; FORDE INQUIRY RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Mr LUCAS** (Lytton—ALP) (6.32 p.m.): I am delighted to make a contribution to the debate tonight. The Forde inquiry into the abuse of children does recreate a very sad picture of institutional abuse that occurred in our State over a lengthy period. A number of constituents came to see me prior to the implementation of the Forde inquiry and they gave me a number of very sad accounts of what had happened to them, particularly two who were at Westbrook in the early sixties. What is sadder about Westbrook is that there was an inquiry by Mr A. E. Schwarten, who was a magistrate, into Westbrook at the time. It indicated that a whole lot of abuses were taking place, but it appears that it took another 38 years and a courageous Minister in the Beattie Labor Government to actually finally look at addressing it.

As I said, I am delighted to speak tonight. I really do want to pay great credit to the Minister and the Beattie Labor Government for finally undertaking something that should have been done a long time ago. What did the crowd opposite do about allegations of institutional abuse? Nothing! What did this current Minister do? She set up an inquiry under a very respected person such as Leneen Forde with some highly respected assistant commissioners and came out with the results. That inquiry did not go back only 5 years or 10 years; it went back to 1911. It has been a most comprehensive inquiry, with no punches pulled, but it took this Minister to set up that inquiry. It really brings no credit on members opposite for them to get up here and hypocritically call on this Government to introduce an implementation unit when they did nothing about it themselves. It is this Minister under this Government who set up the Forde inquiry.

**Mr Wilson:** They couldn't implement an inquiry.

**Mr LUCAS:** They could not even implement an inquiry. They could not even get an inquiry off the ground, let alone implement the recommendations of this one.

There were some 42 recommendations of the inquiry, and they are very instructive. If members opposite look at the last recommendation, they will see that it is that the Queensland Government establish a process for the implementation and review of the recommendations, together with annual progress reports to the Parliament. That is what we are talking about. We are talking about the Government accepting responsibility to look at the implementation of this report, and the implementation of the report across a broad range of organisations that it applies to.

What is the suggestion of the Opposition? Another bureaucracy! Who is going to pay for it? As we in this place all know, there is no bottomless pit of money, but the money will come from direct service delivery to our young people in this State—the people who need it in family services—to set up a bureaucracy with people wearing suits, instead of people actually out there delivering services to those who need them.

It is a bit rich, I think—in fact, it is laughable—for the shadow Minister for Families to come in here and suggest that we set up an implementation unit when it was he who spent \$14.5m on a blind Connolly/Ryan inquiry—the only Attorney-General in the Western World to stay on after a Lower House vote of no confidence. This is the sort of standard that he wants to set up—implementation units. And who did he appoint to that? Peter Connolly, counsel for Russell Cooper, who did not mind expressing his editorial views whilst a commissioner; Peter Connolly, a former Liberal member of the Parliament!

That is the sort of standard that the former Attorney-General looks to. Honourable members have only to look at what Justice Thomas said when he closed down the inquiry.

What does the member opposite want to do now? Just what he did with the Connolly/Ryan inquiry? The Carruthers inquiry was running, but he set up the Connolly/Ryan one as well. He is being consistent: we have finished Forde, we have an implementation unit, so we had better have an implementation unit to implement the implementation unit as well! That is the sort of standard that he looks at. \$14.5m was wasted. Going to the shadow Minister for advice on setting up an inquiry is like consulting "Typhoid Mary" on public health issues.

What would \$14.5m get us? This is what we could do with the \$14.5m that the shadow Minister blew. We could fund more than 200 front-line child protection workers for 12 months. We could run the Children's Commission for 10 years. We could suicide proof the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre seven times. We could completely rebuild the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville and we could fund 20 youth workers on the street, including at night, for 14 years. That is what he could have done with the \$14.5m that he blew up in smoke through his incompetence when he was a Minister in the last Government.

It has been this courageous Minister who has been far sighted. It has been this Minister who has wanted to bite the bullet and actually do something about child abuse. We have the material now. We will be implementing the recommendations. There are some terrible tales of neglect and terrible stories in this report that really do make any parent or, indeed, any citizen of this State feel very sad about what happened before us—both as Governments and as members of our community. It is about time we did something, and I have confidence that in her short time in office, this Minister has shown already that she wants to do something, and we will be seeing something done very soon by the Beattie/Elder Labor Government—not a sham, not \$14.5m wasted, but money actually going towards investing in the future of our children.

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