



Speech by

Hon. V. LESTER

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Hansard 9 June 1999

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Hon. V. P. LESTER (Keppel—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): I am calling upon Minister Welford to explain, apologise and say sorry for the despicable action of officers from his department's Environmental Protection Agency, who descended upon a tourist bus with 20 elderly people on board at Black Mountain near Cooktown. The guide was led away to the ranger's vehicle for intensive questioning about the need for a permit. The guide had to walk away from the questioning to assist elderly people who were left in the hot sun and were starting to panic.

Attempts were made the next day to question the guide and he refused, pending the presence of a solicitor. Then came a letter about fees: \$200 initial fees and \$160 per annum. Now it has been revealed that the parking area where the questioning took place was indeed a road and camping reserve under the trusteeship of the Cook Shire. No permit was required.

I call upon the Minister to apologise and say sorry. So far, the Minister has not done so. It is not a thing to smile about. For goodness' sake, one of those people could have died. What sort of image is the Minister trying to create? Is he going to let his officers become a bunch of environmental thugs? Frankly, the Minister should be ashamed of himself. I suggest to the Minister that he get some compassion into his being.
