



Speech by

Mr M. HORAN

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard 28 April 2004

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.00 p.m.): What a remarkable evening we are having with the hypocrisy that is tumbling out of the mouths of the members opposite! I remember coming into this place in the early 1990s and debating the freedom of information legislation. I heard all the platitudes about how we were going to have this brave new world of FOI and all the nasty things that happened during the Bjelke-Petersen era. I heard all of that when I came into this place in 1991. Over the past decade I have sat here and seen FOI systematically abused by the government that actually brought it in. Not only have bucket loads and port loads of papers been taken into cabinet; literally truck loads have been taken to cabinet in a deliberate and blatant breaking of the true spirit and process of the FOI legislation.

This particular motion comes from the whole Lockhart River episode. What a farce it was! Members should ask anyone in the community and they will tell them that they thought that it was the greatest farce in the world. The Premier turned an incident where a bottle of wine was taken on a plane 2,000 metres above the ground between Cairns and Brisbane to be drunk on the return journey into a major, major issue that cost the public probably millions. He had to fly the plane back to Lockhart River, there were police investigations, CMC investigations—the lot. But the Premier did that. That was typical. He wanted to turn it into a big issue about himself and in the same process find a scapegoat. That is always the modus operandi: find some little person he can blame—'Not me, Peter Perfect. It was not me; it was some media adviser' or 'It was someone working for the Police Union' or 'It was someone else, but it wasn't me'. That is how the Premier works.

Because of all of that, we had this process put in place. In a case where they should have got up and said, 'It was an honest and innocent mistake, a single bottle of wine, we did not mean to do it, we did not understand the rules, we are sorry'—again, that word 'sorry'—it was turned into a big episode. But that exposed how this government operates. It exposed the Premier trying to find someone to blame. It exposed the whole system of the Premier pulling together the troops, all of the legal advisers and everybody else. So they blamed this person. Unfortunately, that person came out and told the truth. Then the Premier was caught in the spotlight with the embarrassment of knowing that it was really not that person who was to blame; it was someone closer to him. So he then sends the matter off to the CMC. Then the reports came out. The report showed that the member for Cook did not tell the police all facts and hid facts, probably under the instructions that he received when they had their team meeting on how to manage this whole affair, how to cover it up—

Mr O'BRIEN: I rise to a point of order.

Mr HORAN: The member will have his go in a minute.

Mr O'BRIEN: I rise to a point of order.

Mr HORAN: The member will get five minutes in a minute.

Mr O'BRIEN: I find those comments offensive and I ask for them to be withdrawn.

Mr HORAN: Yes, I take it back. The member can try to tell the truth tonight. He has the chance.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toowoomba South will withdraw.

Mr HORAN: I did withdraw.

Mr SPEAKER: No, you did not. That was not the word you used.

Mr HORAN: I withdrew and I went on to say that you had the chance in your five minutes—

Mr SPEAKER: No, you will address the chair also.

Mr HORAN: I am trying to.

Mr SPEAKER: You are not by facing that way.

Mr HORAN: The member has his chance tonight to do that. If this government has any courage, it will release those documents. The member says that he wants the documents released. Let us have them out there in the open and maybe then we might find out the real truth of this whole matter.

The Premier found someone lower down the chain that he could blame—a decent person with a decent family. He blamed her and then when she came out and told the truth, he put all of this into action. This is how the Premier operates. He blames someone else. Look at what happened to Ross Musgrove. He got blamed for things. Merri Rose got blamed for this, that and the other. That was another cover-up. All the documents were taken to cabinet.

We are seeing a system by a Premier and a cabinet who are drunk on the margin that they have in this parliament. They no longer really care. They have got 66 or 63 seats. They can do what they like and treat this parliament, the media and the community like a dirty doormat. The Premier thinks that he can manage all of these things, blame someone further down the chain and walk away from it. I think the public are sick and tired of hearing him say 'I have an open and accountable government' when the public know that he has not, that he has a track record of blaming other people, a track record of covering up, whether it is child abuse in the Department of Families, the failure to ensure the proper investigation of child abuse, or whether it is the use of ministerial cars or accidents that occur in those cars—

Time expired.