



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard 22 April 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Government Jet, Alcohol

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (4.28 a.m.), by leave: The CMC has just released its report into the Lockhart River allegations. I table a copy of that CMC report for the information of the House. The police have also made a decision in relation to the Lockhart River wine matter. I table a copy of their news release for the information of the House. The CMC has found as follows—I quote from their report—

The Commission has documented the circumstances surrounding the discovery of a bottle of wine in a government aircraft on the tarmac at Lockhart River airport, and has examined the events from the point of view of whether official misconduct took place. The CMC has found no evidence—

no evidence—

to support the allegations against the Premier, the minister and the director-general. The Commission considers the following allegations are unsubstantiated:

- the Premier and the minister gave untruthful accounts in public concerning their knowledge of the presence of the wine on the aircraft
- the director-general and the minister misled the police concerning their knowledge of the presence of the wine on the aircraft
- there was political interference in the police investigation
- there was official misconduct associated with the offer of employment to Ms Mullan in the wake of her dismissal.

So it found that any allegations in relation to any of those matters are unsubstantiated. It continues—

The CMC did not specifically investigate whether an offence under the Liquor Act had been committed, as this was left to the QPS.

Of course, that is the Queensland Police Service. The report continues—

The Commissioner of Police is of the opinion that no offence was constituted by the possession of the bottle in the plane on the tarmac, since the relevant statute did not apply unless the bottle was in a 'public place' and the plane on the tarmac was not such a place. The Commission agrees with the Commissioner of Police that there was no offence committed under the Liquor Act.

There is evidence which, if accepted, is capable of establishing that four officers gave misleading information to police but, in light of the decision of the Commissioner of Police and for the other reasons set out in this report, the CMC does not recommend disciplinary action be taken.

The Commission does not believe that further official attention to this whole issue is warranted.

So what it found is that no criminal charges should be pursued and no disciplinary matters should be pursued. The Police Commissioner said—

No charges would be laid by police in connection with the discovery of a bottle of wine on a Government aircraft at Lockhart River on 3 March this year.

The Commissioner continues—

I have considered a wide range of material in relation to the matter, including legal advice and from this I have formed the belief that at the time of the incident, the tarmac of the Lockhart River airport was not a public place within the meaning of the relevant legislation.

So what this means is that the government has a clean bill of health. One thing that Queenslanders will know from today, as they have always known, is that this government is one that is honest and a government with integrity. But it does say, however, that there is an opposition who is prepared to

basically say and do anything to damage this government to try to win votes, and we should clearly understand that.

Mr Springborg interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: The member is not in his proper seat. He cannot even follow the rules in here. Mr Deputy Speaker Poole, the Leader of the Opposition was party, along with a number of other people, to defaming my chief of staff. My chief of staff is one of the most hardworking people possible—

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Poole): Order! The member for Toowoomba South!

Mr BEATTIE: I want to draw to the attention of the House as part of my ministerial this: you see, those opposite want to spend all the time in the gutter, but they do not like it when the independent umpire finds out that they cannot tell the truth.

Mr Horan interjected.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I have named the member for Toowoomba South. He will cease interjecting.

Mr BEATTIE: I want to make this very clear: my chief of staff is a decent person. I think it gets to the lowest possible politics when people like staff members are attacked, which is what the opposition did. I refer members to page 16 of the report where it says—

On the information available to the CMC there is no evidence of any political interference in the police investigation. On the contrary, the evidence is that the Premier and the Chief of Staff acted entirely appropriately and were of assistance to the police in the matter.

I call on the opposition to apologise to my chief of staff and I call on the opposition to apologise to Liddy Clark, the minister, and to the director-general. Let me make it absolutely clear that the minister has been found to have acted honestly and without any blemish whatsoever in her conduct. Let me be really clear. I want it said on the record today that she has my full faith and confidence and I stand by her. While she has been through a very difficult time, I think members in this House know exactly her level of honesty and integrity.

The other matters I want to refer to are these: we are going to move on. We are going to move on and we are going to ensure that our fight against alcohol abuse in indigenous communities continues. Nothing is going to stop us ensuring that indigenous men and women and children are given a fair go. So there is nothing in this report that suggests that anyone should be subject to criminal or disciplinary proceedings—no-one. That includes the member for Cook, Jason O'Brien, the minister, the director-general, the pilots and the other two staff. From this day forth I hope that Queenslanders understand that whenever the opposition alleges wild allegations against the government the opposition should never be believed.