



Speech by

Hon. Judy Spence

MEMBER FOR SUNNYBANK

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

MOTION: ESTABLISHMENT OF ROYAL COMMISSION, ALLEGATIONS OF CORRUPTION

Hon. JC SPENCE (Sunnybank—ALP) (6.01 pm): This debate tonight is about ethics and standards. The irony of this debate is that it is from an opposition leader who has been caught out deceiving the people of Queensland by producing a doctored email as proof that he could legitimately spend taxpayer money promoting his own vanity. This is a man who is so mesmerised by the power that has suddenly been thrust upon him that he thinks the money the taxpayer gives him to run the opposition office should be spent on a six-foot high billboard of his face. This is the same man who is so careless and offhanded and does not take the time to thoroughly question his staff when presented with information that he misled the people of Queensland.

This is a man who thinks he can be leader by shrugging off the legitimate questions that journalists put to him. This is a man so devoid of ethical standards that, instead of coming into this House and offering this parliament an explanation of his own errors of judgement and lapse of standard, he offers up tonight a shallow synopsis of Tony Fitzgerald's speech and repeats the same old lines we have heard from the opposition year after year.

I too have read Tony Fitzgerald's speech to Griffith University and I do not have any trouble with his speech. I think it is instructive for all of us. We should never forget the past. Tony Fitzgerald also said—

... Queenslanders know little of that era and are largely ignorant of the possibility that history might be repeated.

He also said, and I have not heard this quoted tonight, that—

Matters are much better than they were but it is a mistake to take that for granted.

That is something that consecutive Labor governments have never done.

The debate that has been raging in this state for the last three weeks about police and corruption, about how people access government and about how government decisions are made is an important one because it is about how democracy is maintained in this state. It is ridiculous for either side of this House to try to take the high moral ground and for the deputy leader and others to talk about names like Bill D'Arcy, Merri Rose and Keith Wright, when we could also talk about names like Leisha Harvey, Gibbs, Lane, Lewis and so on. Let us face it: each side of politics has its crosses to bear when we examine our past. It is important that we remind ourselves daily that democracy is important and fragile and it is up to us to display high ethical standards to maintain our important level of democracy in this state.

In 1989 when people like me ran for unwinnable seats that had been held by the conservative governments for over 32 years, it was because we were sick of the unethical decades of Queensland conservative governments in this state. We wanted to see a government with reformist goals clean up democracy in this state. The Goss, the Beattie and now the Bligh governments have all introduced new layers of accountability with institutions and laws to safeguard democracy, but this vigilance of course must

be maintained. There are always going to be opportunities for corrupt individuals and practices to operate in any organisation.

I have read the CMC investigation into allegations of police misconduct, Operation Capri. I am sure the others have not because there are no pictures in it. It is very clear that our existing institutions—the CMC, the Police Service and our corrections department—are very capable of identifying, investigating and removing corrupt individuals and practices. They even had the assistance of the Australian Crime Commission in this four-year long investigation. I think in many ways it reveals the maturity of these institutions to deal with malpractices. I know from being Minister for Police that most complaints about police these days come from police themselves, not from the general public.

The recent allegations of political cronyism and corruption to which the opposition refers in this motion are being referred by the Premier to the CMC. Queenslanders can have confidence that the CMC has the powers and the capacity to adequately investigate those allegations, as they have done ably in the past. The call by the opposition for a royal commission is nothing more than political grandstanding. The Queensland taxpayer already spends \$43 million on a commission that has all the powers of a royal commission and it is up to the CMC now. I have confidence that they will do their job and investigate these latest allegations.