



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

YOUTH JUSTICE (BOOT CAMP ORDERS) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (10.10 pm): The Leader of the Opposition has set out the Labor Party's concerns about this bill. Those concerns will be reinforced by other opposition members in their contributions. I will focus on specific matters related to new section 282A of the bill, which deals directly with the engagement of service providers, and new section 282B, which sets out the management of boot camp centres.

In late October I was approached by concerned members of the Cairns youth services sector, including Mr Todd Hartley, the CEO of Choice Australia Management Ltd, regarding the Far North Queensland boot camp tender process. Since that time, the tender for FNQ has been awarded to Safe Pathways and I wish them well in delivering on this contract. Several local and interstate organisations made submissions, including Choice Australia—an organisation with 15 years experience in working with young people in the region. In previous contributions to this place, I have placed on the record my admiration of Choice Australia and I have declared that CEO Todd Hartley, the 2009 Cairns Citizen of the Year, supported me during the last election because we share a belief in investing in people for our future. For the record, the submission from Choice Australia outlined partnerships with a large number of organisations including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Welfare Company, Tourism Tropical North Queensland, Advance Cairns, Tourism Queensland, the Northern Pride, Wuchopperen Health Services, Thiess Construction and Abigroup. It included hard funding of \$695,000, with in-kind support of land valued at approximately \$2 million. Choice Australia's proposed activities included the rebuilding of a multipurpose mountain bike track at Smithfield, which would provide significant sports tourism marketing opportunities, yet a local organisation known as Team Wild was short-listed while others such as Choice Australia and the Southern Cross Junior Leaders Camp were not, despite clearly having real and demonstrated experience when compared with Team Wild.

This prompted Mr Hartley to write an email to the Attorney-General on 19 October, which I table, outlining his concerns about the boot camp tender process and the transparency of decision making.

Tabled paper: Email, dated 19 October 2012, from Todd Hartley, Chief Executive Officer, Choice Australia Management Ltd, to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Hon. Jarrod Bleijie, regarding Sentencing Youth Boot Camp, conflict of interest [1730].

The email alleges inappropriate involvement in this process by the member for Cairns on behalf of Team Wild and suggests that the concerns of some members of the selection panel were not heeded in terms of the experience and capacity of Team Wild to meet the criteria set out in the tender document. There have been claims by Team Wild that they are working with disengaged youth, depression, abuse, criminality and marginalisation. It is asserted that Team Wild staff have no professional qualifications, are not registered health professionals and, despite their claims, appear to have no demonstrated experience in working in these specialised areas.

It has also been suggested that the business development manager for Team Wild, David Grant Jackson, told a credible stakeholder two weeks before the submission deadline that he was the government's preferred supplier, allegedly based on verbal advice from the member for Cairns. I have

been provided with information that I believe to be credible that David Jackson, who was put forward as a potential service provider for a boot camps tender, has a more than suspect background. Team Wild is listed as a charity, but it seemed odd that photos or background information about Mr Jackson were almost nonexistent. He had made claims to youth sector workers about his military background, including time in the Special Air Service Regiment out of Perth during 1996. After being questioned by a youth sector worker, who had actually served in the SAS, subsequent searches of military records indicated that Mr Jackson may never have been in the SAS. This prompted further investigation into the character of the potential boot camp provider. David Jackson's personal Facebook posts are littered with anti-Labor and pro-LNP rhetoric and his likes include 'I Hate Julia Gillard' and LNP politicians such as Jarrod Bleijie. On 19 November he posted—

The very essence of success is reliant on the provider—
being able—

to gain the trust of the youths and their families, I can speak from experience on this and can say this will be a very difficult task.

Gaining people's trust is of more interest to David Jackson than most, because in July 2005 he pleaded guilty in the Cairns District Court to stealing and fraud committed in 2003. He used company funds for personal purchases and air travel as well as stealing a post office key, computer hard drive and other items, which were found when police searched his residence. He was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence and was ordered to pay \$2,881 in restitution.

But the real test of David Jackson's character came earlier. An article from the *Woman's Day* magazine of October 2003, which I table, features a photo of a 17-year-old Jackson, then known as David MacLeod.

Tabled paper: Article from the *Woman's Day* titled 'My grandson stole my home' [[1731](#)].

The article titled 'My grandson stole my home' tells of a 29-year-old Mr MacLeod defrauding his own grandmother, fleecing her of her home and being found guilty through subsequent civil action in the Maroochydore District Court.

Team Wild claims to have been delivering services to young offenders since 1999, yet this assertion appears to be false. The first many people in my region had heard of Team Wild was earlier this year through self-promotion by David Jackson. David Jackson has been supported and encouraged by the member for Cairns after the delivery of a school holiday program over June-July this year, appearing in various photographs to promote Team Wild as a can-do group that can get the job done. The nature of Mr Jackson's criminal offences raises the question of whether he is a suitable individual to deliver youth programs designed to instil qualities of integrity, honesty and accountability. There is also a concern about his capacity to manage public funds.

For those in the House who think my contribution to this debate is nothing but a kick in the head for the member for Cairns and the LNP, I acknowledge that funding for Team Wild's Right of Passage Entitlements—or ROPE—under the Get Set for Work program was approved by the previous government and was used by Team Wild to work with offenders during the dress rehearsal for the boot camp job. This is a matter of public interest and I do not intend to omit the facts and I do not raise these matters lightly. Yesterday, Mr Jackson posted the following on a Facebook forum discussing boot camps—

... Team Wild are delivering another School Holiday program with some funding from the State Government for two months starting December 1.

I am concerned that, unless Mr Jackson and the organisation are looked into more closely, they may be funded for additional future grants, which could otherwise go to more qualified organisations with more appropriate individuals at the helm.

I am informed that at the Cairns community cabinet on 16 September the Attorney-General said that he would personally oversee the boot camp selection process, claiming that he would personally review each tender application. The successful tenderer needed to state clearly that they were capable of delivering the services and they needed to identify the service delivery site, which included providing 24/7 accommodation for five young people and two adults. It has been suggested that the FNQ tender would have been awarded to Team Wild had it not been for the constant murmurs in the youth services sector about the process getting louder and perhaps Mr Hartley's email being taken a bit more seriously by the Attorney-General's office. That may explain why there is doubt arising in the youth services sector as to whether the site for the Cairns boot camp is yet confirmed. Is this because Safe Pathways was a last-minute choice and has been unfairly put in a position where it may not be able to deliver on time? What was the advice from the member for Cairns following the 28 August 2012 meeting at his office where Choice Australia made a presentation to the Attorney-General? Was it that Todd Hartley is a Labor man and that he should not get a look in? The bottom line is that Choice Australia has done business with state and federal governments from both sides of politics over the past 15 years and it would indeed be outrageous if the organisation—or any other for that matter—had been discriminated against and not short-listed on any basis other than merit. It is very difficult to explain how an organisation with a limited financial history and, it seems, no track record of delivery could be short-listed.

I trust that the Attorney-General will ensure Safe Pathways is aware of Mr Jackson's background, particularly given his offer of assistance via a Facebook post yesterday—

... Team Wild will engage with the boot camp provider and have them engage with youths who are candidates for boot camp orders ... I have offered our assistance—a smart operator will take that offer!

I ask the Attorney-General to look into the tender process to ensure that the submission from Choice Australia was not pushed to one side. I also ask him to explain how applicants were short-listed and why and investigate whether preferential treatment was given to Team Wild and David Jackson, a non-declared fraud and very vocal and public supporter of the LNP.