




Speech By
Trevor Watts

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

Record of Proceedings, 18 February 2020

MATTER OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Sleba, Ms L

 **Mr WATTS** (Toowoomba North—LNP) (2.49 pm): I rise today to speak on a matter of grave importance. It is not just important for the people involved but for the integrity of our justice system in Queensland. Let me start by making it clear that there is no attempt to determine innocence or guilt in any of these matters. My only objective is to pursue the truth and justice.

Any matter that deals with such a serious consequence as a person losing their life must have all unanswered questions investigated. For some years now retired coroner John Hutton has investigated the circumstances of the death of Leanne Sleba. Leanne was shot in the back at close range by her husband on 24 April 2008 while searching for a snake in the garage of their rural property at Kingsthorpe. I will return to John Hutton shortly.

This is not the occasion to lay out all of the evidence of this matter, except to say that police investigated them closely and ultimately determined no charges ought to be laid. A coronial inquiry was held and finished approximately three years later. An open finding was recorded. At the time, then coroner Tina Previtiera said—

In light of the exhaustive police investigation, confirmed by the examination of Sergeant David Briese, in which information gathered in connection with the personal and financial relationships between Geoff and Leanne showed no evidence as to a motive for murder, and Geoff Sleba provided substantially consistent versions of events (collaborated to some small extent by his son Rodney) I make no referral to the Director of Public Prosecutions in relation to such a charge.

The coroner added—

I am unable to determine the cause of the sequence of events by which the firearm held by Geoffrey Sleba was discharged into Leanne Sleba's back and whether or not the events occurred by accident.

The coroner went on to say—

There is evidence, however, critical of Geoffrey Sleba's choice and handling of the Boito firearm in the circumstances existing at the time, such as to give rise to a consideration of S.289 of the Criminal Code Act 1899 (QLD).

John Hutton is a retired coroner who has spent his career seeking the truth. He has examined the evidence and the coroner's findings in forensic detail. He spoke with me about these matters and what might be able to be done to seek out the truth in this matter and to answer the questions that remain and, once and for all, resolve it. Resolve it for the sake of Mr Sleba and Leanne's family and so that all Queenslanders may have confidence in the investigations undertaken and the prosecution or otherwise of any matters.

I call on the police minister to review this matter and avail himself of the particular circumstances surrounding it. Once he has reviewed it closely, if he believes it appropriate for further investigation I ask him to speak with the police commission and ask for a referral to the Queensland Police cold case unit. I thank John Hutton for his tireless pursuit of truth. I personally believe that all Queenslanders have a right to natural justice. The rule of law and the delivery of justice is a cornerstone right for all in our Queensland community. Without it, we all stand to suffer the consequences.