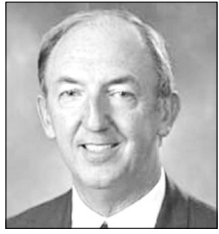


## Detention centre scandal



Mr Springborg



Mr Quinn



Mr Foley



Ms Cunningham



Mr Wellington



Ms Pratt



Ms Roberts



Ms Lee Long

# MPs call for John Oxley inquiry

from page 1

"THEY should hang their heads in shame, and it deserves a lot more investigation for the truth to come out," Mr Quinn's spokesperson said.

Four of Queensland's five independents – Chris Foley (Maryborough), Elisa Roberts (Gympie), Dorothy Pratt (Nanango) and Liz Cunningham (Gladstone), and One Nation's Rosa Lee Long (Tablelands) – said matters surrounding John Oxley Centre needed urgent investigation.

Mr Foley said in light of the new information concerning the rape, the argument used by the Premier in rejecting the need for an inquiry – that the matter had been investigated more times than he had had "hot dinners" – was no longer applicable.

Independent member for Nicklin Peter Wellington said he was happy to support an inquiry as long as it was understood what the terms of reference were, what its legal standing would be, and where the funding would come from.

Gladstone Independent Liz Cunningham

said there had been a struggle for years to get to the bottom of issues relating to the Heiner affair.

"If it had been investigated properly we wouldn't still be talking about it," Ms Cunningham said.

Gympie Independent Elisa Roberts said she would support an inquiry "absolutely 100 per cent", and that the whole matter was "absolutely appalling".

She said she could not believe the government of the day had shredded documents relating to allegations of child abuse, and that there should have been a public outcry.

"Any government that does that should be sacked," Ms Roberts said.

"We live in a democracy ... or supposedly we do."

"You can't pick and choose when you want to be democratic," she said.

Nanango Independent Dorothy Pratt said if the public had been deceived once over matters relating to the centre, the question arose as to how many other times had they been deceived.

A response was sought from two former

public servants who were working for the Department of Family Services at the time the pack rape occurred in 1988 and when Minister Sherrin made his statements about the incident in 1989.

Documents written at the time show John Oxley manager, Peter Coyne, informed his superiors of the May 1988 incident.

However, when contacted, neither could recall details of the matter.

Former Youth Services Executive Director Ian Peers said he was aware there had been an incident, but thought that he had not been told the specifics.

"Look we're going back a number of years here, but I don't believe that I was ever informed that there was a pack rape," he said.

Former Deputy Director-General George Nix said he had no recollection of the pack rape, and could not be sure what information he had been given in relation to it.

"I wouldn't have a clue, I was involved in the administrative side of things," Mr Nix said.

A memo, dated May 30, 1988, to Director-General Alan Pettigrew records that the manager had advised "that there was very little

chance of [the girl] becoming pregnant."

Other documents also report that the girl had been the subject of bullying by inmates and that the manager said "he had spoken to the other children involved in the teasing and threatening, and had advised them of the outcomes should they continue in this fashion."

Mr Nix said it was very unlikely any public servants would have deliberately provided misleading information to a minister.

Mr Peers said there would be no reason for public servants to alter or cover up any of the relevant details.

"In fact, they'd obviously be in breach of their responsibilities if they did anything else but give the full facts," Mr Peers said.

"I mean, if they were aware of a discrepancy they would have brought that to the minister's attention."

Mr Nix said it would have been the Director-General's responsibility to correct any incorrect information given to a minister "and I'm not going to speak for him".

Efforts were made to contact the former John Oxley Centre Manager but at the time of going to print there had been no response.

## Nationals chief wants answers

ANY INVESTIGATION into the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre could only be properly dealt with by a Special Prosecutor, Queensland Nationals president Terry Bolger said.

Mr Bolger said the matter needed to be dealt with at such a level because the issue concerned the abuse of power in a state that lacked effective mechanisms to check misuses of power.

"Without an Upper House we don't have that governance, and we believe that the CMC [Crime and Misconduct Commission] doesn't do that either, so we need to go higher than this so that the people are compelled to give us the answers," Mr Bolger said.

"It needs to be something that has some teeth, and a Special Prosecutor is the only way that that will happen," he said.

"Don't forget there's boys covering up for boys in this," Mr Bolger said.

## Lawyers press on with claim

THE APPARENT cover-up of "significant issues of abuse" was "an appalling state of affairs", one of the lawyers acting for the girl at the centre of the John Oxley pack rape allegations said.

Shine Roche McGowan partner Roger Singh said people involved in the misleading of the public over the true age and circumstances of the then 14-year-old girl "should be bought to account for being allowed to conduct themselves in this way."

Mr Singh said his firm was continuing with her claim, although "issues like the Statute of Limitations have been raised, which is an attempt by the State to shirk their responsibility for the misconduct which they've inflicted."

He said his next move would be to bring an application for an extension of time from the court to overcome the limitation hurdle.



Beryce Nelson giving evidence to the House of Representatives 'Heiner Inquiry' hearings

## Girl's treatment 'tragic', former minister says

MISLEADING claims which covered up details of the pack rape of a 14-year-old girl in care was part of a "tragic miscarriage of justice", a former state government Minister said.

Former Family Services Minister Beryce Nelson said the deceit concerning the age and circumstances of the girl, who was an inmate of the now-closed John Oxley Youth Detention Centre, would have been motivated by a desire to avoid an inquiry.

Mrs Nelson, who set up the Heiner Inquiry in 1989 to investigate allegations of abuse at the centre, said the tragedy was being continued with the Beattie Government fighting the victim's claim for compensation in the courts.

"I think it is a clear indication of what happens to women in the justice system in Queensland and Australia," she said.

"And crimes of violence against women have become treated less and less seriously over the last 20 years to the extent that I find it deeply offensive as a woman."

Mrs Nelson said she believed Mr Sherrin's claims would have been based on the advice provided to him by the Department.

However, Mrs Nelson said she rejected the view that the Department had fulfilled its duty of care by asking the girl's family if they wanted to pursue the issue of rape when it occurred.

She said if she had been Minister at the time she would have thoroughly investigated the matter.

"Under the legislation, juveniles are there under the care and protection of the court, and they're under the Child Safety Act and the Child Protection Act, so the Minister actually has the responsibility to see that people in their care are safe," Mrs Nelson said.

## Public officials' silence seen as 'conspiracy'

THE MAN who has campaigned for 15 years to have the Heiner Inquiry shredding investigated said the deception involving a 14-year-old and an allegation of rape was not just about misleading the public.

The falsehoods also revealed the failure of those who had a responsibility to investigate crime, Kevin Lindeberg said.

"In my view it's open to conclude it's a tip of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, because I am aware that the assault against the girl falls into the category of criminal paedophilia," he said.

Mr Lindeberg said he was very concerned about the integrity of the system, because there were people still working in the public sector who must have known the truth for 15 years but had never said a word.

"What reliance can the public have in what the government is telling them about the welfare of children in State care?" he said.

Mr Lindeberg said that parliament should be recalled immediately to appoint a Special Prosecutor who could get to the bottom of the matter.

"There is a maxim 'Justice delayed is justice denied'," he said.

He also described the government's action in fighting the girl's claim for compensation as 'immoral'.

"And it's another example of how far the Queensland government will go to prevent the truth from coming out," he said.

"So it's using all the forces of the State to prevent this girl from getting justice."

Mr Lindeberg was also critical of the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) which had previously claimed to have investigated matters surrounding the John Oxley centre but had cleared all involved of wrongdoing.

Mr Lindeberg said the Commission and others had claimed over the years that the John Oxley matter had been investigated "to the nth degree" but once again, he said, the Premier's answer meant this was clearly not the case.