

Shreddergate latest

Grievance inquiry starts

Justin Rooks

THE SENATE has begun its investigation into whether false or misleading information was given to previous Senate inquiries investigating the Heiner affair.

The Senate Select Committee on the Lindeberg Grievance will consider whether the Goss Labor government deliberately misled two Senate Select Committees and a Committee of Privileges in 1995.

The present committee will be chaired by Tasmanian Senator John Watson, who told *The Independent Monthly* they had begun collecting information and would soon be calling for witnesses and submissions.

Central to the inquiry will be whether the Senate has the ability to summon current or former members of the Queensland state government to give evidence.

"On that matter we are getting advice at the present time," Senator Watson said.

Senate Select Committees have the power to compel witnesses and request documents as evidence, but these powers of compulsion

are rarely used.

In regard to the current inquiry Senator Watson said "in some cases that may be necessary."

"I have requested advice from the Clerk of the Senate about the extent to which the Senate can demand information from officers in terms of limitations of the constitution," he said.

The Clerk of the Senate, Mr Harry Evans, told *The Independent Monthly* that there seemed to be a legal limit on the Senate's ability to compel current state members to appear before a federal inquiry.

"It's an implied limit in the constitution that has never been settled through a dispute in the High Court," he said.

Senator Watson said there were a range of issues that the committee had yet to satisfy itself with before it began to call for witnesses and submissions.

"I've had a lot of experience chairing lots of committees ... and I certainly don't intend to try to pursue matters where I think they are going to lead to a dead-end or to be embarrassed as a result of having limited powers under the constitution," he said.

The senator said there were problems in terms of accountability and transparency in relation to federal and state governments and it was unfortunate that the Senate's ability to investigate issues could be restricted as a result.

"It's a little bit unfortunate from a transparency point of view, because we are all about openness, transparency and accountability nowadays," he said.

There were measures that could be taken to ensure that certain individuals appeared before the inquiry.

"It all depends who the witness is, and how relevant the witness is germane to your terms of inquiry.

"There is a whole list of people we have asked advice on but I don't want to go through the whole list at this stage," he said.

Senator Watson said he expected all parties and individuals involved to be cooperative.

"We haven't called for witnesses or submissions yet but they will be advertised shortly."

When asked if the Queensland government would take the same view as the Goss government in 1995 and instruct its public



Senator Watson

servants not to cooperate with a Senate committee, the Premier's office said there had been no contact from the committee and when there was an appropriate decision would be made.

... the ABC produces an Australian Story

Milton Sau

FORMER union representative Kevin Linderberg's 14 years battle to expose injustices involved in the shredding of the Heiner inquiry documents will be documented by ABC - TV's Australian Story this month.

Australian Story producer Caitlin Shea said the focus of the story would be on Mr Linderberg's "highs and lows" in his long battle.

"It also focuses on the family side of things, and how difficult it has been for his wife and children," Ms Shea said.

"He got sacked, and his wife had to go out to work, so it has been quite difficult for his family."

"There are a lot of people in the story who believe Kevin is on a futile quest, but there are a lot of credible people who believe that Kevin is exposing a great injustice," she said.

"So I put it all out there, and I'm hoping that people can make up their own minds about this."

Ms Shea said she had also interviewed Mr Linderberg's daughter, Naomi, who is a journalism student in the University of Queensland.

"Since she's been to university, and realised that people take it seriously, and people lecture on it in universities all over the world, she's realised that her father is pursuing something very important," Ms Shea said.

She said the program would also be showing footage of students delivering the Journalism School's newspaper, *The Independent Monthly*, as well as lectures, tutorials and activities in the student newsroom.

"We also filmed students going on a trip to the Lower Portals, to see for themselves, where the pack rape [of a girl in custody] occurred," she said.

Ms Shea said she had interviewed Mr Lindeberg ten years ago as a junior reporter on the Seven-Thirty Report, never thinking she would be doing a major profile on him, ten years later.

"I have seen this Heiner story in the newspaper, and never really fully understood it, so it has been good, through Bruce [Grundy] and Kevin, to learn what it's actually all about," she said.

"Now I have a full understanding of it, and I supposed that's given me some insights into it."

Ms Shea said in recent times the media in Queensland had not been particularly interested in the story.

"The Courier-Mail has decided, it seems to me, not to run any more stories unless something really new breaks," she said.

"So I think there is this general perception in the media in Queensland, that they are a bit tired of it all."

But Ms Shea said it is very timely to be looking at this story because Kevin Linderberg had managed to get another Senate inquiry established.

Australian Story at work ... shooting in *The Independent Monthly* newsroom Photo: Milton Sau

"Kevin manages to keep getting inquiry after inquiry, and he manages to keep putting it on the public agenda," she said.

"Whether you agree with Kevin or not, you have to admire him for his persistence."

Ms Shea said she had also interviewed Premier Peter Beattie to get a reaction from the government.

"Kevin and Bruce have been making some fairly serious allegations, so I make sure that it is balanced by getting Peter Beattie's side of the story," she said.

The story is due to air on Monday May 17 on ABC TV's Australian Story at 8.00 pm.

Australian Story has an audience of 1.2 million viewers nation wide.

... and no response yet to TIM queries

EFFORTS by *The Independent Monthly* to obtain information from the Child Safety Minister about the rape of a girl being held in the John Oxley Youth Centre in the late 1980s have so far been unsuccessful.

As reported in recent editions of the paper, former Minister Craig Sherrin told the press in 1989 that a 17-year-old girl had been raped on an outing from the centre.

Over the last two months *The Independent Monthly* has asked current Child Safety

Minister Mike Reynolds whether the girl was in fact 17, whether she was Caucasian or Aboriginal and where the rape had taken place.

To date there has been no response from the Minister.

And in light of the charging in 2001 (and the recent conviction) of a man for destroying evidence in 1995, we have also asked the Police Commissioner if he intends to charge those who destroyed evidence relating to the

John Oxley Youth Centre in 1990.

To date Mr Atkinson has not provided any response to our questions.

We have also asked CMC Chair Brendan Butler if he wished to respond to a claim by House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee Chair Bronwyn Bishop that a CJC investigation into the rape of a girl in the John Oxley Centre was a "whitewash".

To date there has been no reply.

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