DATE 17th Oct 10
To contact Gerry: 8983 1302(bh) 8983 1237(ah) 0428 698 037(mobile)

TO SWEAR OR NOT TO SWEAR

Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says he will not be supporting changes to the Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act that is being debated in the upcoming Parliamentary sittings unless there are changes.

He says that the changes to the schedule show only one form of words ‘I promise to tell the truth to the court’. The words ‘I swear etc’ have been dropped.

Alternative words can be used but you would have to tell the court first and you would have to know the Oaths, Affidavits and Declarations Act – not something likely to be read by the average punter.

Gerry says that people should have a clear choice when they are either in court or are making an oath of allegiance or office as used by Police.

He says that Police when being sworn in will now only be given one set of words instead of the present situation where they can either swear or affirm – they will now only affirm.

Gerry says the reasons given by the Government based on the recommendations on the Law Reform committee do not stand up. For instance they say that Aboriginal people don’t understand the words and that Christian beliefs are declining.

Gerry says that this is a put down of Aboriginal people and secondly swearing before God does not have to be a Christian God. He says that when he has attended many graduation ceremonies for both Police Officers and Aboriginal Community Police Officers the vast majority swear not affirm.

Gerry says our language is important in everything we do and words used reflect the importance, seriousness or solemnity of a particular situation. The dumbing down of the language and the removal of swearing before God are something he will not support.

He supports a choice of words but this new schedule limiting the words to just one set of words shows a lowest common denominator mentality and discriminates against those who believe in God and wish that belief to be recognised when Taking an oath.