A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS

I can’t afford a full page ad in the NT News to match the Government’s full page in today’s NT News about debate on an urgency motion. So I’ll have to stick to a media release to respond to this piece of political trash that makes me wonder how low the Government has to stoop in an attempt to hoodwink the public.

The facts are

- The Government wanted to rush through Parliament a very important Bill regarding new police powers in relation to stopping and searching vehicles
- Police do have existing powers
- Normally bills are introduced into Parliament and sit for at least 30 days so they can be properly scrutinised
- The Bill proposed is a combination of other pieces of NT Legislation and SA legislation
- The Government notified me on the previous Wednesday afternoon that this is what it intended to do
- The Member for Goyder and I had a briefing the Monday before Parliament sat
- We were told that the Law Society and NAAJA hadn’t seen the Bill and that the Regulations had not been finalised
- The Government asked on Tuesday if I would like to speak to the Police Commissioner which I did
- I considered what I had been told so far
- I felt I needed a second or third opinion because if we want to stop drug couriers than we need to make sure the legislation did not have any loopholes and was workable i.e. actually did stop and convict drug and alcohol couriers
- I spoke with one Minister saying that if the Government gave a bit more time to consider the Bill then perhaps Parliament could be recalled before the next scheduled sittings to debate the Bill and have it passed
- I support the sentiment and basis of the Bill
- I don’t want drugs in our community but that doesn’t mean the laws to stop drugs in our community should not be scrutinised properly and carefully

The ad in the paper doesn’t mention that this Bill was not sent to the Ice Committee of which I am a member. The Committee could have called all interested parties together at a public hearing and reported back to the Government. Why didn’t that happen?
The ad infers that I opposed this bill by saying I blocked this Bill. That is the deceit in this ad. I blocked the urgency motion put up by the Attorney-General.

The ad says that Government members supported the Bill. The Bill was not voted on. The Government members supported the urgency motion.

This is gutter politics and I suppose I expected it but hoped it wouldn’t happen. The Government or the anonymous person who authorised this ad has deliberately tried to infer that I am willing to allow more drugs on the street and into our community simply because I made a decision that an important Bill needed thorough scrutiny.

I made that decision independently of others and I did so because I thought it was the right thing to do. I don’t mind being questioned or criticised for decisions I make; that comes with the job as a Member of Parliament but when criticism is based on lies and deceit no wonder people have no respect for our Parliament or politicians anymore.

Thankfully Territorians are not stupid as this ad implies and they can see through the deceit that has been peddled by the Government.

PS I will send this ad to the Auditor General for a ruling about whether this was improper use of taxpayers money.

Gerry Wood
Independent (original)
MLA for Nelson

_Cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo_