

DOORSTOP INTERVIEW ON IAN SINCLAIR

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Prime Minister:

This whole matter has been subject to the grossest injustice, perpetrated by the Labor Party and also by some people in NSW. There is, what is in affect, an inquiry that has judicial implications, being undertaken by an agency for the NSW Labor government. Time and time again, some of the evidence has been leaked out into the Parliament through some Opposition office in this Parliament. The matter is part heard. Evidence - alleged evidence - is part introduced into the Parliament, all designed quite deliberately to damage Ian Sinclair. There is a long standing rule that this kind of debate cannot take the place of a judicial proceeding. That is so that people's future will not be prejudiced, so that the court can make its findings properly and clearly, and then whatever flows from that, flows.

There is no such rule to protect Members, whether they be Members of Parliament, or members of the public, from quasi judicial proceedings, from administrative proceedings, which can have just as great an effect on the future of individuals as can a normal judicial proceeding in a court. This is a matter that the Parliament is really going to have to look to, I believe. It is not only a question of what happens to Members of Parliament, it is also very much a question that - as things now stand - people outside Parliament can, without any redress, be slandered and destroyed by statements made inside the Parliament.

We have not acted on this before because the Sinclair inquiry, conducted by the NSW Labor government has been continuing. We did not want allegations of trying to drop debate in the middle of that particular inquiry because it had been started in that way. But once Finnane's report, on behalf of the Labor government, has been completed and published, then I think very seriously, the Parliament needs to look to its own procedures. Great and gross injustices have been perpetrated by bringing into the Parliament some evidence, or things alleged to be evidence, not necessarily corroborated, by members of the Labor Party. This all ought to have waited on the results of Mr Finnane's inquiry.

I've said, on a number of occasions, that there is a question of basic common decency, that there is a question of basic justice in the way these things ought to be handled. That has certainly been absent in the case of Ian Sinclair.