

NATIVE TITLE, ABOLITION IMPLICATIONS

**47. Mr A.P. O'GORMAN to the Deputy Premier:**

I refer to calls for the abolition of native title. What would be the implications of such a course of action?

**Mr E.S. RIPPER replied:**

Occasionally, calls are made by people on the far right of politics for native title to be abolished. Sometimes, those calls come from people who just do not understand what native title is about or what are Australia's constitutional arrangements. However, the latest call is from someone who should know about those matters, because he is a member of the leadership group of the Liberal Party. This person was a member of the previous coalition Cabinet that stitched up the 10-point plan with John Howard which was supposed to fix native title. The call has come from a man who should know about native title and who was involved in the arrangements with John Howard which, according to the proponents of those arrangements, were supposed to settle native title in Australia. A media statement issued yesterday by this member of the Liberal Party leadership group - Hon Norman Moore - states -

... the recent High Court decision in the Ward case, coupled with the serious impasse that has developed on the Burrup Peninsula, has finally convinced him that Native Title is an unworkable mess and the law should be repealed.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: Does the member for Kalgoorlie support that statement? The member for Kalgoorlie is Hon Norman Moore's protege. Hon Norman Moore is the reason that the member for Kalgoorlie has stars in his eyes. Does the member support this statement? He will not answer.

I will explain what would happen. If the lawful property rights of indigenous people - native title - were abolished, those people would have an immediate right to compensation under the just terms compensation provisions of the Australian Constitution. Quite frankly, the nation could not afford the cost. That is why John Howard ruled out that idea. The comments of Hon Norman Moore show a return to the philosophy of the Liberal Party of 1995, when the Liberal Party in this State tried to abolish native title and lost 7-0 in the High Court. Hon Norman Moore's statement is not only contrary to that background but also to the policies that the coalition took to the last election. One such policy stated -

The Coalition Government is committed to the resolution of native title to ensure a better future for all Western Australians. At the same time, the Aboriginal community is entitled to expect that its lawful rights and entitlements to native title are respected and accepted.

Some members have criticised Hon Norman Moore for his comments. However, there has been one notable omission. The member for Kalgoorlie has not criticised Hon Norman Moore; however, there is an even more notable omission.

Mr M.J. Birney interjected.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: What is the view of the member for Kalgoorlie?

Mr M.J. Birney: I said that I am certainly not one of them.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The member for Kalgoorlie is not a critic of Hon Norman Moore. That says a bit; however, another person has failed to criticise Hon Norman Moore - at least publicly - on this occasion. I refer to the sensitive new-age Leader of the Opposition, the man who was going to modernise the Liberal Party and make it more inclusive. Does the Leader of the Opposition endorse Hon Norman Moore's statement? Does Hon Norman Moore's statement reflect the new Liberal Party policy? Does the Leader of the Opposition support the recognition and protection of native title? What is his position?

Mr C.J. Barnett: I have just been to the north of the State. If the Government genuinely cared about the welfare of Aboriginal people, it would be doing something about the 150 desert people who are living in drainage ditches around Port Headland. That is what really matters.

Mr E.S. RIPPER: The Leader of the Opposition did not answer the question; he did not take the opportunity to face down Hon Norman Moore. The Leader of the Opposition will not take a stand against Hon Norman Moore, and that provides a clue to what this issue is really about. Has Hon Norman Moore - just coincidentally - decided to campaign on native title, or is there something else going on? Hon Norman Moore's speech was given last Thursday; however, the press release was hawked around only yesterday. Days after the media failed to note his speech, Hon Norman Moore started to hawk his press statement in an attempt to gain coverage. What is going on? This is all a part of the disarray that is taking place within the Liberal Party. It is a direct act of

defiance against the policy and election commitments of the Leader of the Opposition. In response, the Leader of the Opposition has remained silent and does not dare face down Hon Norman Moore. The Leader of the Opposition is not a leader - he is a hostage.