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**612 ABC BRISBANE STEVE AUSTIN 8.47AM
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*ALLEGATIONS OF THE RAPE OF A FOURTEEN YEAR
OLD GIRL IN THE JOHN OXLEY YOUTH CENTRE HAVE
BEEN REFERRED TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE
COMMISSION.*

*INTERVIEW WITH michael, former john oxley youth centre
worker; QueensLanD FAMILY SERVICES MINISTER JUDY
SPENCE.*

STEVE AUSTIN - PRESENTER:

Allegations of the rape of a fourteen year old girl in the John Oxley Youth Centre have been referred to the Criminal Justice Commission. And Department of Family Services Minister Judy Spence has said that some former staff that were in the department at that time will be made available to the CJC. You might recall that Brisbane's Courier-Mail revealed that a fourteen year old girl had been pack-raped allegedly while in the state-run institution. The centre has since been bulldozed, however damage to the children hasn't been fully dealt with. A former staff members ... former staff members have said the matter involving a fourteen year old girl was swept under the carpet and hushed up.

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Let's speak, or let's hear from one person who was at the centre back at that time who wishes to be known just under the name of Michael.

MICHAEL – FORMER JOHN OXLEY YOUTH CENTRE WORKER:

I feel too many people are protecting their posteriors in the interest of self-improvement at that time, you know, in getting on in the (indistinct) bureaucracy government and it's just pure self-interest.

AUSTIN:

What do you know of the alleged rape involving this young girl?

MICHAEL:

I cannot remember ... as I said, this is going back about 1988, '87-88 ... remember if I was on duty or not. Everybody knew. I wasn't told directly, but we all knew. And then we were told ... we were summonsed down a couple of days later to Peter Coyne's office and we were told it would be handled internally. We were under the Secrecy Act and we were not to discuss it outside. And they would handle it, you know, internally.

AUSTIN:

What was the Secrecy Act that was cited as the reason why you couldn't speak?



MICHAEL:

That everybody who was in the government employ in that sort of job basically you didn't discuss what went on outside of duty concerning the children.

AUSTIN:

Did that surprise you when you were told you could say nothing?

MICHAEL:

It did. It did. Because, quite frankly, I thought it would be taken to the highest level. I mean, rape is rape, isn't it? And especially those children were in the care of us, Peter Coyne being the manager, and the other staff there. They were in the protection. Okay, they weren't little angels, there were a lot of nasty little children there, but the point is that ... or that is beside the point. That they were under the protection of the Family Services and they weren't getting it.

AUSTIN:

Do you think ... or the government's attitude or the current government's attitude, seems to be that this matter has all been dealt with by the Forde Inquiry so that's essentially the end of the story and ...

MICHAEL:

That was not. That is incorrect because I was interviewed by



... what's his name then, very nice, a magistrate and his assistant? Oh ...

AUSTIN:

This is way back in '89 are you talking?

MICHAEL:

Yeah, that's right. And ...

AUSTIN:

Noel Hyner (ph.sp.)?

MICHAEL:

That's it, that's it. And he was very nice. Put it all on tape and everything. I spent ... oh, a lot of us spent time in there. I can't give you the other names because I can't remember. But I was there and I know other people went. And then I think Anne Warner (ph.sp.) had it all shredded.

AUSTIN:

All right. Well the government's attitude seems to be that the Forde Inquiry has dealt with all these matters so there's no further investigation.

MICHAEL:

No, I don't agree with that. I don't, I think it's all been pushed under the carpet.



AUSTIN:

Judy Spence, you're currently the Family Services Minister. Your staff are being made available to the Criminal Justice Commission to be interviewed about this matter, is that right?

JUDY SPENCE – QLD FAMILY SERVICES MINISTER:

That's right. Good morning, Steve. I think it's wrong to say that the government's attitude is that these matters have been dealt with by the Forde Inquiry and there's no need for further investigations. We're determined that allegations such as these must be thoroughly and openly investigated.

I've already instructed senior staff of the misconduct prevention branch to make inquiries with departmental officers still in the department who are alleged to be involved in this issue and the matter will be refer... it has been referred to the Criminal Justice Commission to determine if any former officer of the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre currently employed in the department is guilty of official misconduct.

We've also made contact with the Queensland Police Service and we will co-operate with any inquiry or investigation instituted in relation to the matter.

AUSTIN:

Judy Spence, can I ask you, a number of these kids that



were at the centre at that time, do they need some sort of state assistance with counselling, perhaps even ongoing counselling supplied by your department currently?

SPENCE:

Well, one of the things that the Forde Inquiry did, was give those young people the opportunity to raise their issues in a formal inquiry. As a result of that inquiry, we have established the Forde Foundation and anyone who requires counselling or any sort of assistance can apply to that foundation for financial assistance to help them with counselling.

AUSTIN:

Judy Spence, can I ask you, do you think it was a wise move back in 1989 by the then Goss cabinet to shred the documents of the evidence taken by retired magistrate Noel Hyner?

SPENCE:

Look, I wasn't in cabinet at the time, as you can appreciate, and I have no idea what was in those documents and I ... so I certainly did not examine them. So I know that they've been the subject of a number of inquiries and endless speculation. But I do know that it is important that if we have allegations such as these we do have them properly investigated today. And I know that the CJC and the Queensland Police Service will undertake that on behalf of



this victim.

AUSTIN:

Judy Spence, to the lay observer the state government's main concern or priority seems to have been to avoid potential litigation from former residents of the John Oxley Youth Centre at all costs. Would you agree?

SPENCE:

No, I wouldn't agree with that. No, I don't intend to revisit the whole issue of the Hyner documents. What we have had since then, as I said, is the Forde Inquiry which has firmly allowed these matters to be in the public domain. As you said, the John Oxley Youth Detention Centre is closed. We have a new youth detention centre. We have reformed the juvenile justice system in this state. I think we have learnt the lessons from the past and we have a better future for young people in detention in this state. However, if allegations such as this arise then we are determined to investigate them.

AUSTIN:

Judy Spence, Family Services Minister, thanks for joining me this morning.

SPENCE:

My pleasure.