




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR THEODORE

Record of Proceedings, 5 February 2020

CHILD DEATH REVIEW LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (2.57 pm): I rise to speak on this certainly long overdue legislation. As lawmakers, we have a solemn duty to protect those most vulnerable in our society, to act quickly on situations that arise and to implement recommendations in a timely manner. To understand why this is so important, let us not forget the reason we are debating this bill: a little boy, 21 months old, who died on 11 June 2016 because the system failed him. One can only imagine the nightmare, torment and pain this little boy went through, yet his suffering for an extended period of time is beyond comprehension. When his story hit the media, it sent shockwaves through our community and depicted the harsh reality of what humans are capable of.

The true tragedy is that Mason's circumstances were known to not just one but two government agencies—Child Safety Services and Queensland Health. These agencies had the power to act and keep Mason safe but failed to do so. Therefore, the reputation of these workers, especially in Child Safety, was seriously compromised. As a result, both agencies initiated a formal review into their handling of the situation prior to Mason's death. The Queensland Family and Child Commission was instructed formally to oversee this review and ensure it was completed in a timely manner.

It is disappointing to see that it has taken almost three years for this government to debate this bill—a bill that has one overarching recommendation. Queenslanders have a right to ask why it has taken so long to act upon this. Many would say this is inexcusable. It only drives home the lack of accountability in our political system, especially when we are dealing with the most vulnerable in our community: our children.

The one overarching recommendation made by the Queensland Family and Child Commission in March 2017 was designed to save lives. Therefore, one could surmise that this delay has potentially placed other children at risk. One could ask how many other children known to Child Safety could be alive today if this recommendation had been acted upon sooner. The answer to that question we will never know.

Our society has become accustomed to seeing these horrendous crimes. That is a sad indictment but also highlights the issue of individual accountability. As Edmund Burke once said, the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing. As many members in this chamber have spoken about, it requires a community-wide approach. If we see things, we need to report them. If we feel that a child is in danger, we need to report it. Unfortunately, the department of child safety and the police cannot be everywhere.

The little boy who was not even two years old when he died would have been six this year. It is very disappointing to me and many other Queenslanders that this Labor government has taken so long to bring forth this bill and implement one overarching recommendation.