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~~Debate, on motion of Ms Jarratt, adjourned.~~

~~MINISTERIAL STATEMENT~~

~~Integrity, Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, Report No. 107~~

~~**Hon. PJ LAWLOR** (Southport—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Fair Trading) (2.30 pm), by leave: In accordance with report No. 107 of the Integrity, Ethics and Parliamentary Privileges Committee, I unreservedly apologise to both the member for Mudgeeraba and the member for Kawana in relation to the imputations contained in my answer to a question without notice on 25 February 2010 and also to the constituents concerned.~~

CHILD PROTECTION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

First Reading

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (2.30 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Child Protection Act 1999, Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000, Community Services Act 2007, Disability Services Act 2006, Family Services Act 1987, Juvenile Justice and Other Acts Amendment Act 2009 and Public Service Act 2008 for particular purposes. I present the explanatory notes, and I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Tabled paper: Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill

Tabled paper: Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill, explanatory notes.

Second Reading

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (2.30 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

Child safety is everyone's business and the Bligh government is committed to protecting Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people. That is why since 2004 this government has doubled the workforce and tripled the Child Safety budget.

I am pleased to introduce the Child Protection and Other Acts Amendment bill 2010. The bill has two main functions. The first is to enhance the administration of Queensland's Child Protection Act 1999 to enable it to respond more effectively to the individual needs of children at risk and in care. Secondly, the bill provides the legislative foundation for this government's Helping Out Families initiative. That initiative aims to deliver the right type of service to vulnerable families as early as possible. Early intervention and prevention is one of my main priorities as child safety minister. Helping Out Families will strengthen the capacity of non-government early intervention and family support. This will be achieved through the establishment of a lead Family Support Alliance organisation and a network of service providers in three pilot sites—Logan and Beenleigh-Eagleby in October 2010, and Gold Coast by 30 January 2011.

Under the Helping Out Families initiative, child safety service centres will refer a family, via their new regional intake service, to a Family Support Alliance organisation. To support this approach, referrals will be made from Child Safety Services to the Family Support Alliance organisation without requiring the family's consent. The bill provides amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999 to allow this information to be provided and to ensure the referral information remains confidential. Under the new system, supported by this bill, the Family Support Alliance organisation will be established to receive this information, engage the family and coordinate the most appropriate response.

Indigenous family support organisations will link with the Family Support Alliance organisations to provide services to Indigenous families in the three pilot sites. The government has allocated \$8.5 million state-wide to Indigenous family support organisations. The bill will require the consent of families for information to be supplied to other services beyond the Family Support Alliance organisation, and this will be part of their engagement process.

As mentioned, the bill also includes amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999 that allow our statutory child safety system to respond more effectively to the individual needs of children at risk and in care. These include: enshrining the safety and wellbeing of children, along with the best interests of a

child, in the paramount principle that guides all decision making; including a framework of principles to improve decision making to promote children's safety, wellbeing and best interests; recognising the important role of long-term guardians, other than the chief executive; enhancing the ability of Child Safety Services to secure the safety of children in need of protection; recognising the cumulative nature of harm; overcoming barriers in the gathering and sharing of information when responding to allegations of child abuse or concerns about unborn children; and creating a new three-business-day temporary custody order. The department can apply for this order where it already holds the view that a child is in need of protection and does not need to conduct an assessment.

The bill will also amend the act to give the court a discretionary power, when it declines a further order, to set a future end date for an existing child protection order. The future end date will not be more than 28 days after the day of the court's decision. This is to ensure that Child Safety Services can have time to prepare and assist a child to return to their parents' care in a planned way that minimises disruption and trauma to the child.

To emphasise the importance of stability in decision making about a child, the bill will also amend the Child Protection Act 1999 so the Children's Court must have regard to the child's need for emotional security and stability before deciding whether to grant a further short-term order or an extension to an existing short-term order.

The bill will also recognise stability for children of arrangements under long-term guardianship orders. Long-term guardians are often related family members and it is appropriate to recognise their important role in providing stability for the children in their care. Currently when an application is lodged with the court to revoke a long-term guardianship order the act specifies that the court may revoke the order if it is no longer necessary to protect the child. The bill will change this so that the court must also consider the child's need for emotional security and stability. This will acknowledge the importance of a stable home, emotional security and the child's attachment to their guardian developed over time. The bill also gives children and long-term guardians who are not the chief executive more control over when their case plan will be reviewed.

These and other significant changes are outlined in the bill's explanatory notes and are administered under the principle that the safety, wellbeing and best interests of a child are paramount. I commend the previous child safety minister, the member for Albert, Margaret Keech, who laid much of the groundwork for these amendments.

The policy positions underpinning these amendments were set out in the policy paper *Proposing amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999*. Widespread consultation was undertaken and the high level of response from both government and non-government stakeholders shows the Queensland community's strong interest in protecting our children and young people. The proposals in the paper were generally supported and I thank PeakCare Queensland, Foster Care Queensland, CREATE Foundation, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, South West Brisbane Community Legal Centre, Historical Abuse Network, Save the Children, NAPCAN, Legal Aid Queensland, QCOSS and the Queensland Law Society for their feedback which informed the refinement of the amendments.

Child protection is everyone's business and this government is committed to protecting our most vulnerable children and young people. This bill will enable our tertiary child protection system to work hand in hand with the non-government sector to better support families in need before they require ongoing statutory intervention.

As well as enhancing the administration of the Child Protection Act and providing the legislative framework for the Helping Out Families initiative, the bill also contains a range of other amendments to the Child Protection Act 1999 aimed at achieving better outcomes for children, young people and their families and technical amendments to a number of acts to support the original policy intent of the Criminal History Screening Legislation Amendment Act 2010. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate, on motion of Mr Dempsey, adjourned.

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~~APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL~~

~~APPROPRIATION BILL~~

~~REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL~~

~~Second Reading (Cognate Debate)~~