



Speech by
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MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

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CHILDREN SERVICES TRIBUNAL BILL; COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE BILL

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (3.35 p.m.): While the National/Liberal coalition supports this legislation in principle, we have a number of concerns about the Bills, some of which we will attempt to address by way of amendments at the Committee stage.

Provisions in this legislation have not been made retrospective in relation to screening current paid employees in child-related employment. However, the screening provisions will relate to all future paid employees and to many volunteers in specific circumstances.

The legislation fails to be proactive. That is, it does not set out as a function of the commission that it will conduct, promote and monitor training and public awareness activities relating to the protection of children from abuse. Moreover, the legislation fails to make it an offence for someone with a conviction for an offence of a sexual nature committed against a child to apply for or continue in employment, whether paid or unpaid, in child-related activities.

I believe criminal sanctions should be available if people who are disqualified from working with children breach their ban or if someone offers to a person they know is banned the opportunity to work with children. I think that is fairly important, because we need to ensure that people who have been convicted of such offences are not allowed to obtain work with children. We debated this matter at length in the House on another occasion. I will say more about that later. I had hoped we might see an attempt by the Government to include this particular provision in the legislation.

I have major concerns about the availability of adequate resources to enable implementation of provisions contained in the legislation. I think I say that with some justification, in view of recent problems within the department. Staff have gone on strike and there has been an increase in workload in recent times. Whether we talk about the department or the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the fact is that resources are needed in order to implement the legislation. Although there is some money for one or two specific areas, there is no general increase in funding which I believe is necessary to ensure that this legislation is implemented.

I refer to the issue of public awareness. Queenslanders could have expected, as part of the Government approach to the issue, a proactive requirement on the part of the commission. Yet while the commission's functions contain many laudable goals, this proactive approach is not part of them. I am sure that all community groups, whether they be sporting, cultural, church or youth groups, would agree strongly that this should have been contained in the legislation.

I believe public awareness about the need for the protection of children from abuse is of paramount importance. I think there is reason to presume that this would have been part of this legislation. In fact, this issue was mentioned at some length in the recent report of the Queensland Crime Commission, dated November 2000, into child sexual abuse in Queensland. That report highlighted the need for public awareness, not just on the part of groups but also in the community generally.

In her second-reading speech the Minister said that this legislation was evidence of the Government's commitment to the protection of Queensland's children and young people. To be fair, whilst this legislation is a step forward, we have to ensure the availability of adequate resources. As I

have already indicated, there are one or two areas of grave deficiency in the legislation. I thought the Minister or the Government would pick them up, particularly in view of the fact that all future volunteers in specific circumstances will be covered by the legislation and there will be a requirement that they gain a clearance before being employed.

The Minister links this legislation with the Child Protection Act. That is a fair connection, actually. I think that reinforces one of the issues I have raised, that is, the need to ensure it is correctly resourced. It is all very well to have a wealth of new processes and orders and a plethora of additional demands on an already overworked staff, but the Government needs to ensure that the people involved in this area, whether they be in the department or in the Children's Commission itself, have adequate resources to ensure that the added workload can be handled.

I note that pages 2 and 3 of the Explanatory Notes to the Commission for Children and Young People Bill refer to the matter of the estimated cost of implementation. They state—

"The expanded functions and powers of the commission will require some additional funding. It is anticipated that the employment screening for child related employment will operate on a cost neutral basis by charging a \$40 fee for employment screening for paid employees in child-related employment and self employed persons carrying on child related businesses. Additional funding will be provided by government for the expanded community visitor function. All other costs will be met within existing resources."

I raise this matter because I believe that those matters should have been spelt out in any case under the requirements of the Legislative Standards Act 1992. I am not just picking on this particular Minister, but I happened to have reason recently to turn up the Legislative Standards Act and see whether there was compliance with the Act where costing was concerned. The Explanatory Notes do not actually meet the requirements of the Legislative Standards Act anymore. Subsection (1)(e) of section 23, which deals with the content of the Explanatory Notes to the Bill, states—

"... a brief assessment of the administrative cost to government of implementing the Bill, including staffing and program costs but not the costs of developing the Bill."

I think it is fair to say from that that one could have expected some actual figures in the Explanatory Notes. I know Governments do not like doing that—we know all about that—but it should be in the Explanatory Notes. I have previously raised these issues during the Estimates committee process. The Bill had been introduced and because funding was specified in it I was able to raise some matters. But that does not get away from the fact that there should be some specific reference to this because I may not have picked up all the matters during the Estimates committee. Of course Estimates committee hearings do not always coincide with Bills being before the Parliament that one wants to debate. In this case the Estimates committee hearing just happened to coincide. As funding had been provided in the Budget for the provisions of this Bill, it was appropriate to raise questions about it.

I notice that, under the Legislative Standards Act, "costs" include "burdens and disadvantages" and "direct and indirect economic, environmental and social costs". As I say, I have noticed that this has happened not only in this instance but in a number of other instances. It is quite clear that there are no figures given in relation to this particular piece of legislation. I know there is an amount of some hundreds of thousands involved for the community visitor. I know that the Minister indicated in the Estimates that other matters would be picked up within existing resources.

Although it is not mentioned here, I understand that the tribunal is to be transferred to the Attorney-General's office. I would have thought that there might have been some reference to that in the second-reading speech or the Explanatory Notes. I could not find that in the Explanatory Notes, but I had picked that information up in recent months anyway, possibly during the Estimates discussions.

I make the point that this Bill and a range of other Bills do not meet the requirements of the Legislative Standards Act in regard to costs and funding. The Explanatory Notes to the Children Services Tribunal Bill 2000 are similar. On page 3 they state—

"The cost of implementing this legislation will be met within existing resources."

While on that topic, I might just mention that there will be a considerable increase in the workload of the tribunal because of the range of matters that will be coming forward in the future. If this is the case, I ask whether or not the Government has taken that into account. Because of the broader application of the legislation, considerably more matters will be coming before the tribunal. Of course, the tribunal is set up in a most appropriate and proper fashion—I am not arguing about that—but the processing of applications will take considerably longer, which will consume additional resources. This is where the Government gets itself into a lot of difficulty with this and other legislation: the funding does not meet the rhetoric. The rhetoric is very easy, but it is much more difficult to provide the resources at the coalface where they need to be. The Forde inquiry identified a range of problems caused by inadequate funding.

I want to move on to the screenings area because I think it is particularly important. The Government is putting in place a proposal to charge a \$40 fee for paid employment screening for child-related employment and also for self-employed persons in child-related employment. Clearly, this fee is designed to cover those costs, although no doubt there would be some padding which will be used to help offset the cost of voluntary screenings. I accept that that is fair enough. I think the costing has been set aside. Whether or not it is sufficient to meet the ongoing demands in this area will be another matter. The Queensland Police Service will have the major costs in this area because it will be doing most of the work. The Children's Commissioner will be processing the applications as they come in and, I presume, sending them on pretty smartly to the Police Service under whatever process is set up so that the officers there can process them expeditiously.

Having said all of that, I should say that the \$40 fee means increased costs to a range of community groups, sporting clubs and so on. I think, at the end of the day, most of the sporting organisations will probably be happy to pay that. Many of them, of course, get screening now. I will touch on that in a moment. Many groups in the community screen all their volunteers as well as their paid employees. The Minister stated that she expected the number of applications would be 20,000 in the first half year when the program is put in place. That came out of a set of Budget documents, so I presume it would be expected to be roughly 40,000 applications for a full year. From memory, organisations have a year to process these screenings.

Most larger groups already pay to have their people screened with the Queensland Police Service. Some smaller community groups—particularly sporting groups such as pony clubs and recreation groups—have small budgets and will find this difficult. I believe there have been consultations regarding this matter. I am not sure whether the Minister has taken these aspects into account. I do not know how the Minister proposes to get over the problem of community groups finding themselves in difficulty.

Groups who have paid employees ought to be able to pay for this screening service. In this instance we are referring to paid employees and not volunteers. There should be no difficulty in that area. However, there could be some minor hiccups. As I have mentioned, the numbers could involve some 40,000 in a full year. We will have 20,000 people being processed in the first half of the first year. These people have to be processed every two years because the applications have to be renewed every two years.

One of the issues concerning the screening process is that it covers groups of volunteers. I am aware that some organisations cover themselves as far as their leaders are concerned. I am referring particularly in this regard to the scouting movement and the Girl Guides movement. These organisations undertake checks on their leaders, and have done so for some time. These are organisations which are structured and which have been built on discipline. It is part of the code. It is much easier for such organisations to ensure that people who offer themselves as leaders are screened.

Representatives of sporting groups have raised some of the concerns that they have. No doubt the Minister is well aware of these problems. These groups will have problems in relation to volunteers. Sporting groups are quite different from structured organisations. The folk are there to have a pleasant time. I think it is fair to say that sporting groups are particularly concerned about this legislation.

It has been indicated to me that criminal history screening of individuals in child-related employment is only one component of increasing protection for children. The people involved would argue that greater emphasis ought to be placed on the development of education and implementation strategies. These could be put in place to optimise the degree to which State sporting bodies and their constituent bodies can adapt legislation to their requirements. These bodies do not believe it will be very effective. They believe they will have difficulty in screening their volunteers, such as coaches, managers and other helpers.

A lot of volunteers are parents, and as parents they may be accepted under certain sections of the legislation. The legislation identifies the people who will be covered—namely churches, clubs and associations—in relation to children. I will touch on this matter later. The legislation identifies those who will be regulated and those who will not be regulated.

In our sporting and recreation groups we have a range of people who move from being parents one day, and thus exempt, to being suddenly caught under the legislation and requiring screening. I believe this will cause a great deal of havoc. Sporting groups and other bodies are very concerned about this matter because they believe it will cause a lot of difficulties in administration. It will be difficult to keep track of just who is caught under this legislation.

I do not believe that sufficient consideration has been given to this matter. The legislation is not made retrospective for current paid employees. Every group I have consulted believes that if future paid employees should be screened, the same rule should apply to current paid employees. It is a straightforward process. It is necessary that clubs ensure that there is proper scrutiny of all the people involved.

We know that on occasions child abuse occurs where people have been involved with these organisations for a long period. They become adept at being part of the organisation and carry out their activities under the cover of the organisation.

I received some correspondence from someone who is involved with a pony club. This person was terribly concerned because the pony club has over 11,000 members. It comprises 240 clubs in 26 zones and 10 regions. This person believes that the pony club will be caught up under this legislation in regard to its employees. Sometimes parents are involved and sometimes parents are not involved. Sometimes there are volunteers mixing with the children. Officials at the pony club are very concerned about how this legislation is going to affect the club. The paperwork will be an administrative nightmare.

All the groups I have spoken to believe that their paid employees—even current ones—will be caught up. They agreed that such employees should be screened. They believe that if it is good enough for future employees, it should be good enough for current employees. I can understand that rationale.

It is very difficult to get volunteers for sporting groups, recreational groups or pony clubs. It is difficult to get people who are prepared to play an active role in such clubs. Parents become involved at times because their children are involved. However, sometimes it is necessary to have other volunteers involved because there are not sufficient parents available. Quite often parents do not have the necessary skills that are required. In the area of coaching in such sports as cricket and football it is often necessary to bring in people from the community to perform these tasks. It is necessary to encourage people to join these clubs and thus play a role in the training of children.

It has been said to me that it would be beneficial if there was a proper educational awareness program for all employees and children. There needs to be a program of education and awareness for the children so they know what to look for with regard to sexual offences and in identifying paedophiles. Offenders are much more likely to be picked up in this way than they are through a screening process of volunteers.

Some community groups believe that better results will be achieved through teaching children what is acceptable behaviour, especially in regard to touching. It is necessary to teach sport administrators what they must look for so that they can recognise instances of inappropriate behaviour before they develop too far. It is necessary to have an educational awareness program to ensure that children and administrators know where to go for help. The necessary help can only be provided if we have adequately funded and staffed resources—whether it be the police, the Children's Commissioner or the department.

As I say, these people believe that this is going to be a great burden on them in terms of their volunteers. I think that it will have some ramifications. Those people have raised with me the issue that the legislation will not cover their current paid employees in child-related areas. I think the Minister ought to give further consideration to that. As I say, some of these organisations already undertake screenings. I can understand why organisations such as the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides do that. I think they are to be commended for doing that, because they are structured organisations with leaders who take young people away on camps and a whole range of other activities. It is most appropriate such people be screened. People involved with children's sporting groups rarely take children away. Generally, the activities of those groups involve children on playing fields and a host of people are involved. However, I think the legislation is deficient in terms of awareness, and that is particularly important as it relates to children. It is not spelt out anywhere in the legislation, and it is something that could have been expected to have been spelt out.

I notice that registered health practitioners are not covered in the definition of regulated businesses in Part 2, Division 1. Apparently there are reasons for that, but the Explanatory Notes are silent on the issue. I ask the Minister to clarify that situation. It has been some time since I have looked at it, but I recollect that there was an issue in Part 2, Division 1 in relation to registered health practitioners and I queried the reason for their exclusion. It seems to me that from time to time these people—whether they be psychologists or whatever—may be with young people in a situation that could lead to a breach of trust.

While I am talking about employment screening, education and training, as I mentioned at the outset the Queensland Crime Commission report into child sexual abuse in this State, which was released this month, contained a section on employment screening. On reading through that section it appeared to me to be quite clear that the Queensland Crime Commission believed not only in screening employees, particularly paid employees, but also in education and training. Education and training is a very important part of the process of weeding out paedophiles and sex offenders. The report states—

"Depending on criminal history checks alone, however, is not only inadequate, it may well be dangerous. It may give employers undue confidence that all offenders have been detected, whereas only a small percentage of offenders are likely to be charged with, or convicted of, an offence. The new and existing employment screening legislation focus

exclusively on ensuring agencies conduct criminal history checks. To be effective, this approach needs to be integrated into a more comprehensive employment screening process, including education and training."

The report goes on to talk about other matters to do with Project Axis, which I will not take the time to read because I do not think it is quite appropriate to the part of the Bill about which I am speaking. Certainly the Crime Commission believes that there should be not only screening of employees but also education and training.

The Queensland Law Society has written to me because it is concerned that people will be excluded from jobs even though they have been acquitted of offences. Of course, we have covered that issue in relation to a range of other legislation, for example, the Child Protection Act. It is not a matter that I intend to press, because the Opposition agrees with that part of the Bill. It picks up people who have been investigated, although they might not have been convicted of an offence. They may not have been convicted because of a lack of evidence or for some other reason, but it is certainly a matter for the Police Commissioner to pass on that information so that down the track people can make a judgment on the situation. I will not pursue that matter, but I raise it because the Law Society sent me a submission in relation to it.

I have covered fully that part of the Bill which deals with volunteers. I do not intend to spend more time on it. We will talk more about it when we come to the Committee stage. I want to say a good deal more about the retrospectivity in relation to paid child-related employment. I think that it is fair to say that the legislation goes a long way towards weeding out paedophiles in checking people for employment, but it does not do much in the area of educational awareness. It is certainly of concern to me that a kind of hysteria seems to be developing in the community about paedophilia and child abuse. I raise this matter because it has been raised with me on a number of occasions recently. I think it is regrettable that people get hysterical about the issue. Paedophilia and other sexual offences are abhorrent. Nevertheless, we should not lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of people are good people.

I raise this issue as it relates to male schoolteachers in particular. I think it is very sad that today there are very few male schoolteachers. These days the vast majority of schoolteachers are female. I have nothing against female schoolteachers, but it is very sad that we have so few male schoolteachers. One of the reasons for that is the hysteria that has been created surrounding paedophilia, and not just in relation to school teaching. The other night I was at a meeting where I was told about a very hardworking, community-minded person who for many, many years did some work around a kindergarten for a couple of days a week on his way home from work. This person is a salt-of-the-earth type of person. He has been doing work for communities—not just for kindergartens but for a range groups—for many years. One of the mothers complained about him being there for a couple of afternoons a week and asked what he was doing there. In the end, this person decided that it was all too much for him. He could not be bothered doing it anymore. It is unfortunate that things have got to that stage.

We need legislation and we need tough criminal penalties. The torture provisions that the coalition Government introduced seem to be working pretty well. I notice that these days a lot of people seem to be charged with torture when they get picked up for child abuse. There are more provisions relating to offences against children than are contained in this Bill. However, we should not lose sight of the fact that we need not be concerned about the majority of the community; we need only be concerned about a very small minority in the community. There is no need for hysteria. I mention that again because time after time I read in the papers and see in the media stories about the problem of paedophilia which border on hysteria. I think it is terribly sad that that is occurring. We do not want the community getting hysterical about the issue.

I have referred to teachers. Unfortunately, these days a number of families do not have a male partner in the house. Because there is no male partner in the house, there is no male person in some young people's lives perhaps for weeks at a time. Those young people might spend time with a male person on the weekend, and that is fine. However, sometimes they can go for weeks without a male presence. Those young people then lack male companionship and the male outlook on life. I think that that causes a problem for schools.

I notice that at quite a lot of P & C meetings the issue is raised as to how schools can increase the number of male teachers. I think that it is fairly sad that this situation has developed. I am not sure of the percentage of female teachers in the teaching profession, but it certainly seems to be very high. At larger schools which have more than 20 teachers there might be two male teachers. A school with a dozen teachers may have one male teacher. Members on both sides of the Parliament need to be aware of and pay attention to that issue to ensure that we do not end up developing a culture of hysteria in the community where we are looking for paedophiles and sex offenders under every stone at every turn. There are some, and we have to weed those out, certainly.

Of course, what is lost sight of currently is that the cases that are coming before the courts now actually relate to events that happened decades ago. Today we have a different culture. I can understand how, decades ago, young boys and girls would have gone home and not told their parents about what had occurred at school or in the community generally. Today, that would not be tolerated by young people. We are dealing with people of a different era.

The Queensland Law Society has expressed concerns about the role of the community visitor under the community visitor program. The society's submission to me states—

"Although the Bill stipulates in Part 5 that the community visitor is to attend detention centres in order to promote and protect the interests of children, in our view the Bill cannot achieve that objective while it is open to the community visitor to be subpoenaed to give evidence about what the child has said. Children will be guarded in discussing issues and complaints if they know the community visitor can be required to divulge the contents of that discussion."

That matter has been raised with me by other people as well. I would like to hear the Minister's comments about the Government's reasoning for including such a provision. The Government needs to be sure that information about inappropriate activities at its facilities is passed on to the authorities. Of course, if confidentiality is introduced, authorities may not find out about some activities which are occurring and which ought not be happening. There are some difficulties. On the one hand there is the inappropriate activities; on the other hand there is the confidentiality concerns raised by the Queensland Law Society.

I would be inclined to agree with the way that the Government has gone in relation to this matter, because the authorities do need feedback on those activities. That is the role of the community visitor. I appreciate that the point raised by the Law Society may be relevant, in that occasions may arise when young people might not want to come forward. But there must be a process that can be put in place to enable the Government to overcome those concerns. Even if the Minister cannot address that matter today, I am sure the Minister and her departmental officers can look at that matter further to see whether concerns can be addressed, thereby ensuring that young people in those facilities do not withhold relevant information from the community visitor.

I raise the issue of regularity of visits. The legislation provides that the Commissioner must make arrangements for each visitable site to be visited by a community visitor regularly and frequently. I like those words. I am sure that the Commissioner will appreciate that there is a need to make sure the facilities are visited on a regular basis. We would not want to find out that there was a six-month visit and that over five of those six months there was some activity occurring that should have been brought to the attention of the authorities in the meantime. That would not look very good for the community visitor program at all.

I trust that there will be a regular program of frequent visits. It will occur if adequate resources are provided. I again appeal to the Minister to ensure that those resources are forthcoming. One of the central features of the Forde inquiry recommendations was the need to have regular visits by the community visitor. I am sure the Minister is aware of that. The Government would be remiss if it did not ensure that those visits occurred.

Within the legislation there is a limited range of complaints that can be handled by the Children's Commissioner. In fact, on my reading of the legislation, there are five criteria for complaints: the child is the subject of an order under the Child Protection Act; the chief executive of the department is taking action under the Child Protection Act to ensure the child's protection; the child is subject to a community service order, fixed release order, immediate release order or probation order under the Juvenile Justice Act; while the child is in detention under the Juvenile Justice Act or Bail Act; and in the course of a program or service established under the Juvenile Justice Act.

I raise this issue because I think there is a view in the community that all sorts of matters may be picked up under this legislation, but there are definitive areas laid down as to what complaints can be handled by the Children's Commissioner. It needs to be clearly understood that this legislation is not going to mean something to everyone. It is very easy for the rhetoric not to meet the expectations because the legislation does not cover certain matters, and that is something which generally leads to further problems. Of course, at a time when we have so many antisocial behaviour problems, people are always looking for alternative sources of support or assistance in relation to those matters, and it does not appear to me that this is going to be the case with this legislation. I do not think it is going to be able to assist in relation to general antisocial behaviour and the support the parents may be looking for.

The Queensland Law Society also raised with me the recommendation that the office of the Children's Commissioner be strengthened by empowering the commissioner to conduct inquiries into matters affecting children and young people, including the authority to investigate and resolve

complaints about the provision of services to children and young people. I do not think the legislation is that broad, at least on my reading of it. I could attack the Government for not doing that, I suppose, and be critical of the whole exercise and say that the Minister's rhetoric would often lead us to believe that, but I do not believe it goes that far at all. I can understand that, if it was going to be extended to that degree, a whole range of resources and support services would need to be set up in the community to meet any situation that may occur along those lines, because that recommendation just about covers the world. I can think of a whole host of matters. The Government would always be in difficulty and trouble.

The Government has covered a broad range of activities, but it is having problems meeting the funding requirements of the legislation, let alone extending it to the level proposed by the Law Society and as recommended by the Forde inquiry.

The Law Society says the current Commission for Children and Young People Bill contains a very restrictive complaints procedure. Essentially, the majority of children and young people have no standing to invoke the commissioner's complaints powers unless they are subject to either a court order or Department of Families intervention. It is understood that no more than 3% of the young people of Queensland meet those criteria. The society is concerned that as a consequence the commissioner cannot exercise investigative powers in relation to the very people who may be in the most need of assistance. I think they are covering the points I raise. Perhaps the Minister could give us some figures later to tell us what percentage of people might in fact not be covered under the legislation.

Previously, I touched on the Children's Services Tribunal. I just want to ask a couple more questions about the tribunal, particularly the increased number of cases with which it has to deal. I believe there will be an increased number of cases coming forward as a result of this legislation. The time taken to deal with those matters through the tribunal because of the appropriate processes that are now in place under the legislation will be considerably longer than it was previously. I think that there is a need to get some idea of the situation of what might occur in relation to these matters and the number of cases that might be forthcoming.

On 24 November last year we debated in this House the need for legislation to ban those persons convicted of sexual offences against children from applying for jobs that deal with children. This legislation does not cover that motion. I think I am correct in saying that it was moved by the member for Warwick and I have a feeling that it was seconded by the member for Yeronga. Although carried by the Parliament, the thrust of the resolution has not been incorporated in this legislation. The Opposition is most concerned about that because we believe that that worthwhile proposal would certainly go some way towards indicating clearly to people convicted of sexual offences that they should not be making applications for jobs involving children and that they would face a very considerable penalty if they did.

There is no reference to that resolution either in the Minister's second-reading speech or the legislation. I believed it would have been a proactive approach to help prevent child sexual abuse. Because that motion was passed by the Parliament, members could have expected the Minister to have at least made some reference to it in her second-reading speech. It is most disappointing that that initiative has been swept under the carpet and has not been included in this legislation, which is the appropriate legislation to deal with the screening out of persons with a criminal history. As I say, it is most appropriate because it would have sent a very clear signal that people were not to apply in the first place, that they were not to try to get through the screening process which has been set up and that, if they did, they would face quite severe penalties.

I have mentioned the Queensland Crime Commission report a couple of times already. I think it is appropriate to refer to it again. It talks about the need for the Children's Commission of Queensland to be granted sufficient funding to expand its trial data tracking process to examine the progress of individual cases of child sexual abuse through the criminal justice system with a view to gaining a comprehensive understanding of why more child sex offence matters are withdrawn or discontinued than other offence types and provide information about the effective changes to legislation and court practices. This research should be commenced as soon as possible to enable the collection of information against which the effectiveness of any reforms can be measured. That is one amongst a number of other recommendations that are well worth following up and which I would hope the Government would see fit to take under its wing and pursue.

Ms Bligh interjected.

Mr BEANLAND: For the Minister's benefit, I point out that it is recommendation 6 from the Queensland Crime Commission. It relates to the need for the Children's Commission to be given sufficient funding to expand its trial data tracking project to examine the progress of cases involving children that go to court, see what improvements can be made in relation to time delays and see how effective the process is. It is very important that we get a better understanding of that.

The recommendations cover such matters as developing a comprehensive training and education program—again an issue which I raised earlier—to assist those in Government and non-

Government agencies to identify indicators of child sexual abuse. Although we are putting this legislation through, we need to pay close heed to these recommendations from the Queensland Crime Commission. We must remember that the Crime Commission was set up to look at paedophilia in particular because the Criminal Justice Commission simply had not done anything about it even though it was one of its responsibilities for over a decade. So we are really a decade behind in getting this matter under way in these areas. More effort does need to be put into it now that these recommendations are coming forward, particularly in relation to assessing the effectiveness of the programs that we have in place.

There is another recommendation here that Sport and Recreation Queensland in conjunction with the Children's Commission, the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care and sporting organisations develop child protection advisory material to assist sporting and recreation associations to develop their own policies for addressing complaints against staff or volunteers. That is one of the issues that I raised previously, one of a range of other matters that we certainly do not have time to go through.

The agency with responsibility in this area must study this matter in detail to see how these obnoxious people who conduct this deplorable activity go about their processes so that we can find the ways needed to weed them out of the system so that our young people can live in a much safer society. I would like to hear some comments from the Minister about the Government's approach to some of those matters. Although the Queensland Crime Commission has raised them, they are not actually new matters. They have been around for a while. It is terribly important, therefore, that they be pursued.

Before I touch on some other matters, I want to thank the Minister, her staff and the Children's Commissioner for a briefing they gave me. It was so long ago that I have to think when it was. I do thank the commissioner, the departmental staff and the Minister for the briefing on the two pieces of legislation that we are debating here today. Although the coalition is very supportive of the principal legislation, there are three or four areas that we are concerned about, and I have touched on those matters in detail. I will say more about those later.

Some of these matters pick up issues that were previously covered in the Forde inquiry report and others come from a range of other areas. I do implore the Minister to ensure that there is adequate funding across-the-board because without adequate funding and resources the case load in these areas will be so great that the staff will be unable to cope with the workload.
