



Speech by

CATE MOLLOY

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Hansard 23 October 2002

CHILD CARE BILL

Ms MOLLOY (Noosa—ALP) (5.52 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this bill because it will provide a framework of legislation that will lead to the better provision of child care services for the children of Queensland. Over the past 30 years the increase in female participation in the work force has increased dramatically. Today, few families can afford the sheer luxury of either the mother or the father remaining in the home to provide the primary care of their children. Because the nature of the family unit has altered and because of the choices that women and men make regarding their work and home commitments, the child care industry has flourished in the free market and done very well. With any industry, regulations are needed to be put into place to enhance the delivery of service, which brings me to saying that our children, our nation's most precious resource, deserve the kind of care that this bill intends to provide and regulate—balanced, high quality, accountable care.

As a working mother, as an enrolled nurse juggling the task of caring for young children, working shiftwork and studying—in other words, being a supermum—I am well qualified to comment, having accessed child care services that complemented my extended family help. I was one of the fortunate parents who had, and still has, a wonderful husband who shares the responsibility of being primary caregiver. But the need to go to work and study for both of us often meant that we had to rely on family day care, long day care centres, and kinder-creche facilities.

The issues arising from having to place children in care need to be addressed sensitively and intelligently. Hence the minister's departmental staff engaged in extensive community consultation. The licensing of child care services is fairly self-explanatory. For the purposes of licensing, there will be two types of child care services. One would be a centre based service and the other a home based service. When we leave our child with another adult, we need to know that those people know what they are doing and that they will make informed, intelligent decisions when caring for our children. The bill will impose more rigorous minimum qualifications. I am of the opinion that commonsense, a good general education and post-secondary qualifications are not too much to ask. This minimum qualification will not only enhance the care that our children receive but also it will lift the benchmarks, the self-esteem and the informed decisions that carers will make and provide when delivering the service.

For family day care, home based care, to have a great team leader to coordinate the group of carers—generally mums themselves—makes all the difference to how the home based carer survives. With the team leader being also a coordinator, she is able to share her knowledge base, inform the other carers and provide the support that home based care mums need. Often it is a very lonely experience for people caring for maybe seven children in their own home.

The staffing levels will require two people to be present over the lunchtime period. Yes, that will increase the impost on the owners of the child care facilities. However, we are only too aware of the kind of abuse that can arise when there is only one adult present. This occurred historically when child care was provided or when aged care service was provided throughout Australia. So if anyone argues the toss over that small item, I think that they should go back and have a look at history and then they might change their minds. Yes, it might be difficult to attract someone to work for two hours, but there are a lot of people out there who are on pensions who just might appreciate a little bit of extra money in their kick and they might like to share some time with our beautiful kids. The child of a friend of mind was involved in a hideous situation with Mr Stinky in New South Wales. That kind of situation should not be allowed to occur in Queensland child care facilities.

I congratulate the family day care services in Tewantin. Last week I dropped in to visit them while I was out in my mobile office. I would also like to thank the shopkeepers and others who dropped in to say hello and thank them for their friendly welcome. One of my constituents, Keith Allison, from Noosa Coast Guard also stopped and spoke with me. As the children from the Tewantin Primary School got off the bus and walked past us, they all said hello to 'Captain Keith'. Keith is a 25-year serving JP and spends hours and hours at the Tewantin Primary School as a volunteer. This is definitely an example of community based care. I thank Keith for what he does as a volunteer for our lovely children.

Many speakers who have spoken before me this evening have teased out the benefits of this new legislation. Through the introduction of this bill, this government has shown that it is committed to the high quality care of our children. Yes, we need to be ever vigilant to protect children and support the child care industry. I congratulate the minister and her staff on listening to their community and responding.

Debate, on motion of Ms Keech, adjourned.
