



Speech by

JO-ANN MILLER

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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CORONERS BILL; CREMATIONS BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (4.06 p.m.): At the outset I wish to congratulate the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice on this bill. I know that a lot of hard work and effort has been committed to this bill by the Attorney-General, his staff and officers of the Department of Justice over a long period of time. The bill overhauls the coronial system in Queensland with a much stronger emphasis on preventing deaths and a more compassionate approach to families of the deceased.

I wanted to speak on this bill today because I know first-hand of the trauma that families go through when a loved family member has passed away through tragic circumstances. A family in my electorate lost their beloved daughter in tragic circumstances, and it has taken years for that family to come through this trauma. Her father moved to Goodna to be closer to the cemetery. He could not work due to overwhelming grief, yet over a period of years he has received counselling and the support of our community and is now back at work. A more sensitive understanding and compassionate approach to families is welcome in these sad and tragic circumstances.

I am particularly pleased that there will be increased sensitivity to different cultures and beliefs, as I have a high level of people from multicultural backgrounds in my electorate. I am also pleased that families will be given greater access to coronial documents during the investigatory process, as their need to know and their need to be acknowledged is very important. There are nearly 3,000 deaths in Queensland each year that are reported to coroners. Coroners need to be located throughout this state. So it is important that this bill provides that every magistrate is also a coroner.

The bill creates a position of State Coroner. This is a first for Queensland, and the appointee will be responsible for the efficient operation of the coronial system. The State Coroner will also be responsible for the investigations into reportable deaths. It is a very important position, and I am pleased that the State Coroner will provide an annual report on the operations of the State Coroner's office and the operations of the act annually.

The annual report must contain the State Coroner's guidelines for that particular year, a summary of the investigation, including the inquest into each death in custody and a summary of any other investigation that the State Coroner considers should be brought to the minister's attention. These are accountability measures that reflect modern day public administration practices. This is a historic bill before the House. I thank the minister and his department, and I commend the bill to the House.