



Speech by

**Hon. JUDY SPENCE**

**MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT**

---

Hansard 26 November 2003

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Department of Families**

**Hon. J. C. SPENCE** (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (10.15 a.m.): This government is proud of the stand it has taken against domestic violence. I am proud of the major reforms and funding we are now providing to support and help the victims.

In the past five years since the Beattie government came to office, funding for domestic violence and family violence prevention and support services across the state, including accommodation services, has almost doubled to more than \$25 million. This government introduced major legislative reforms to increase protection against domestic and family violence to protect the elderly, people with disabilities and people in some dating relationships—and I remind the House that it was the National Party who voted against these measures. In fact, the only contribution the Leader of the Opposition made to this debate was to air his concern that domestic violence orders were used as a tactic in divorce and custody battles, and that the existing laws enabled magistrates to prevent someone from owning a firearm.

Under the Beattie government, an extra \$3.7 million a year was allocated in this budget for new court support and counselling services to respond to the additional people now eligible for protection; training on the legislation is being provided to court assistance workers and domestic and family violence prevention services in about 40 locations across the state, including indigenous communities in the cape and Torres Strait; a new statewide service—the Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence—was launched a year ago to provide research, education and evaluation; \$1.4 million a year has been allocated to establish healing services to address indigenous family violence; and funding is provided to community organisations to run activities during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Week in May, with the theme 'There is no excuse for abuse'.

There have also been far-reaching reform agendas in the area of child protection, juvenile justice and child care. Given the time, I seek leave to have the remaining part of my statement incorporated in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

Major advances have been made in all these areas in a short time and we have a clear roadmap developed to lead further reform into the future.

Mr Speaker, the recent findings of a Crime and Misconduct Commission research project demonstrated that early intervention strategies are a critical part of the juvenile justice system.

A great deal has already been achieved through the development of programs and services to reduce the level of juvenile offending and there has been a significant decrease in the average daily number of young people in detention since 1994-95.

They generally have low literacy levels and poor prospects of employment.

So it is important that we not only make them account for their actions, but provide them with the counselling, education and skills to support themselves and contribute to society.

We are achieving this through a range of strategies including Statewide youth conferencing programs—this is where young offenders are brought face to face with their victims to complete an agreement to provide restitution, compensation, direct assistance to the victim or take part in community service.

Specialised Youth Justice Services are being established to provide a range of tailored programs for young people.

The rebuilding of the youth detention system is almost completed.

Video conferencing facilities to help young people from remote areas to maintain regular contact with family members and their community while in custody has been introduced to maximise the likelihood of successful reintegration; and New juvenile justice legislation has been introduced.

As well, the Beattie Government has introduced new childcare legislation to give Queensland families a responsive, high quality and sustainable child care system with new laws including qualification requirements for some workers; school age care services will be licensed for the first time; and the number of offences for breaches under the Act will be increased.

This legislation will also ensure the health and safety of children in child care is paramount, with staff to child ratios clearly outlined.

The nature of work and participation of parents in the workforce has changed significantly over past decades, and the new legislation will allow child care services to respond to the changing needs of Queensland families.

We have—

- more than doubled the funding for the Department of Families;
- almost doubled the number of frontline workers;
- invested in the training of our work force and committed to improving quality assurance and information management systems and processes;
- implemented the Forde Recommendations;
- introduced tough new checking systems for staff;
- introduced independent death review teams;
- established the infonet as part of the new transparency where we are making more information available than ever before;
- established new review teams to evaluate and improve the decision making process in our area offices; and
- funded 25 Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Team Coordinators; and 9 Senior Practitioners; and 5 Quality Assurance Officers.

We have delivered major investments in prevention and early intervention through the \$188 million future direction funding package.

These are significant reforms in a difficult and complex area, Mr Speaker, but they are reforms that this Government can be proud of.