



Speech by

KAREN STRUTHERS

MEMBER FOR ALGESTER

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CORONERS BILL; CREMATIONS BILL

Ms STRUTHERS (Algeria—ALP) (4.49 p.m.): The Attorney-General, the Hon. Rod Welford, has led some very significant law reform in the last 12 months. The Coroners Bill is yet another example of law reform driven by our government that will improve the lives of Queenslanders significantly. I support this bill as it will introduce a new coronial system that will be more effective in preventing future deaths, for example deaths in custody that have been the subject of a significant inquiry and responses by government over the past decade or so. It will also provide a more supportive, more compassionate and, importantly, more culturally appropriate response to families enduring grief and the processes associated with coronial inquiries following a death.

I am aware that the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome association, under the leadership of CEO Kathleen Zaruben, formerly Brookes, has been one of the vocal organisations calling for these reforms to the coronial system in Queensland. SIDS has been working actively to achieve a state coroner, to achieve more information for and involvement of families in the investigation of deaths, and to achieve a more comprehensive investigation of deaths, particularly cot deaths, to identify specific causes of death with a view to preventing future deaths. SIDS has worked very hard. I know that it is very pleased with the work the Attorney-General, his staff and other interest groups have put into this Coroners Bill. I know that it is very pleased with the outcomes.

There is probably no pain or loss as severe as the death of a child from the broad and in many ways ill-defined sudden infant death syndrome. The families I know who have endured the loss say that they can never fully overcome this grief. They remain unsure of exactly how their children died. It has been very important to the staff and families involved in SIDS to have a system that can, to the best of its capacity, investigate these deaths and come up with some answers for these families who are struggling with the grief they have endured.

I am pleased to see that an additional budget allocation of \$13.7 million has been made in the 2002-03 state budget primarily to modernise the coronial system. I know that the John Tonge Centre, close to my electorate, on the south side of Brisbane, has been doing some tremendous work. These additional resources will allow it to further its work and particularly increase its capacity to conduct post-mortems. These resources will also enable more thorough support to grieving families. They are all very important goals of this bill. I certainly commend the minister for the work he has been doing.

While I am on my feet, I want to put in a plug for Red Nose Day, the big fundraising day for SIDS. I will not bring in red noses for all members on 27 June, unless they really want me to. It is a very important day. SIDS performs a very important function in our community. I commend its work as well. I commend the work it has done in pursuing some of these changes we are now seeing in the Coroners Bill.