



Speech by

Hon. MIKE REYNOLDS

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard 20 April 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

Hon. M. F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.02 a.m.): I want to inform the House of progress since the blueprint for the implementation of child safety reforms in Queensland was presented to the state government on 22 March. The handing over of the blueprint compiled by the Chair of the Child Protection Reform Implementation Committee, Peter Forster, indeed marked the beginning of a new era in child protection in this state. The Beattie government immediately responded by committing \$201 million in extra funding by the 2006-07 financial year to build a new and radically improved system for Queensland children. It is a system that will be the envy of other jurisdictions because funding levels in per capita terms will be ahead of the national average by the 2006-07 financial year. The blueprint, outlining ways to implement the CMC's recommendations, represents a fresh start and a positive new ethos and culture for everyone involved in child protection in Queensland. Hundreds of copies of the blueprint have been printed for distribution to stakeholders and the public, and the document is accessible on the Premier's departmental web site.

Over the past month the acting director-general and I have personally conducted 38 briefing sessions throughout Queensland and have met with more than 3,500 people, including departmental staff, foster carers, NGOs and child protection advocacy groups. I thank the MPs in the respective areas where I have been for the support they have given me in that regard. I have also specifically consulted with members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the implementation reference panel, which comprises peak child protection bodies and advocacy groups as well.

Front-line child protection staff are taking part in a new training program aimed at better preparing them to deal with complex cases involving children in care. These family services officers, soon to be called child safety officers, are undertaking courses of eight weeks duration and within 12 months this program will become mandatory for all new permanent CSOs before taking up an actual caseload in the department. Managers and team leaders are also being prepared for the transition to new work practices and culture with workshops in Pine Rivers, Toowoomba, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and on the Sunshine Coast.

These two-day workshops, including the one at Pine Rivers for staff from central office in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Ipswich and Logan, will ensure senior staff are very much positioned to lead and support their colleagues through this time of transition to a new ethos and a new culture. Leadership is more critical now than at any time in the past, so we are working closely with our managers and team leaders. They are in fact the agents of change. I am determined to ensure that the interests of children in Queensland are absolutely paramount, and so far I am very heartened by the strength of goodwill among people associated with the child protection system. They have supported the changes, and I think it augurs very well for the future.