



Speech by

# Hon. Mike Reynolds

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Wednesday, 12 May 2004

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Child Protection, Cherbourg

**Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS** (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.06 a.m.): Last week the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, Liddy Clark, and I announced an additional \$77,493 to help children and young people in the Cherbourg community who have been victims of sexual abuse.

This special allocation will provide a sexual abuse counselling service for the next 12 months. The funding is in keeping with commitments Minister Clark, the Premier and I made to the people of Cherbourg during separate visits to their community earlier this year. Those visits were in response to requests from members of the community, particularly mothers and other women, who sought help for children and young people who had been subjected to child sexual abuse and violence.

Today I want to commend the very courageous women leaders of Cherbourg who stated their major concerns about violence and in particular sexual abuse of young indigenous children. They stated 'enough is enough' and that strong commitment for change has been backed up by this funding commitment of the Beattie government.

The government recognised the need for a counselling service and is providing funding for the Wide Bay Sexual Assault Association for the Kid's Intervention and Prevention Program. The money will provide a full-time counsellor, operating costs and some one-off establishment costs to cover the lease of a vehicle for 12 months, telephones and the purchase of a laptop computer and printer.

In the next 12 months the Department of Child Safety and Queensland Health will work closely with the Cherbourg community to identify appropriate cross-government responses to the therapeutic needs of children and young people who have been exposed to risk or harm. The Blueprint for Implementing the Recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission Report into Foster Care identified the need for five more sexual abuse counselling services across the state in light of the over-representation of indigenous people in the child protection system.

Funds of \$3.4 million are available in 2004-05 for family reunification services and sexual abuse counselling services. In June 2004 my Department of Child Safety will seek submissions for funding for these services and key representatives in the Cherbourg community will be encouraged to apply for a share of this funding.

Sexual abuse is repugnant. It can have a horrific impact on children, and counselling is one way to make sure there is help available to those children who have already been through what can only be described as very disturbing ordeals. The funding shows the Beattie government's commitment to improving the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I am confident funding of this nature will make a difference to many young lives.