



Speech by

Hon. Mike Reynolds

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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APPROPRIATION BILL; ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (3.35 p.m.): I thank all members of Estimates Committee B for the role that they have played in regard to their scrutiny and monitoring of the Department of Child Safety and the very important work that we are doing. I thank the chair, Julie Attwood, for the excellent work she has done and all members of the committee who have contributed to that estimates process. I would like to thank the government members for the very positive role they have played with me as the Minister for Child Safety in terms of the amendments that we have brought to the parliament, the support that they will be giving for the other two waves of amendments in September this year and in May next year but also for the very complex and very arduous work that we have all been doing to implement the blueprint and to implement every one of the 110 recommendations that came down in the CMC report on 6 January this year.

I have been very disappointed by the very shallow contributions that have been given in this debate today by the member for Burdekin and the member for Currumbin. Their debates show that they have no clear understanding of the blueprint. The first piece of advice that I would give to both the member for Burdekin and the member for Currumbin is to read the blueprint and to look at the progress that we are making. I would like to say to both of them that our reforms are absolutely on track. We are not behind in any particular area of reform. Indeed, we are doing all we humanly can to bring the reforms into the child protection system at the earliest possible time.

The question that was asked of me by the member for Burdekin, my shadow spokesman, at the estimates committee as to whether a child death was an indicator of the work that was being done by the department illustrates the shallow approach that the opposition has to this whole child protection area. Indeed, as I have said in this chamber before, the system of child protection was subject to systemic failure and we are all aware that the CMC report showed the many dysfunctionalities that were right the way through the department. We have been working through this system of reform for the last six months, and I have a great deal of pride in the work that my director-general, deputy director-general and members of the department are doing in implementing these reforms at the earliest possible time.

As many government members indicated today, they know how hard and complex this area of child protection is. They know that every system of government in Australia at a state and territory level has gone through the concerns that we have. They are also very much aware as members of this government that this is something that internationally is a major concern to governments around the world. So I call on the opposition in talking about that bipartisan support—and I appreciate that—and in talking to the Liberal shadow spokesman to read the blueprint and understand the CMC recommendations. Rather than taking up any comment that is made in the newspaper or made by a member of the community that can be false or ill informed as fact, let us look through the work that we are doing and work with the government in making sure that the most vulnerable children and young people in this state are cared for in the very best possible way we can.

The estimates committee process is something that I welcome as the Minister for Child Safety. As I have indicated before, I want to have a system that is open, transparent and accountable. The estimates committee process is part of that. Some of the things that we were being asked at the estimates committee

about case loads and with regard to some other areas of comparison are things that we are developing, and that is quite clear if members study the blueprint. If members study the blueprint they can see that we are on time, that we are on track and, in fact, that we are doing as much as is humanly possible.

Can I thank the members of the estimates committee who are working with the government and who are working down the path to protect the most vulnerable kids in Queensland. That is our path, and we will keep on doing all we possibly can.