



Speech by

Hon. Mike Reynolds

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Thursday, 19 August 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Adoption Laws

Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.15 a.m.): In recent weeks I have made two significant decisions on adoptions in Queensland and I would like to inform parliament today that these exciting initiatives have been very well received by the people of Queensland. On 25 July, I announced that Queensland's adoption registers would re-open on 12 September this year, ending the two-year freeze on accepting new applications from people wishing to adopt children. Then on 6 August, after numerous representations from the community and many of my colleagues, supported by feedback from the adoption legislation review, I announced the abolition of the maximum age restrictions that applied to eligibility criteria for Queensland couples wishing to adopt children. So when the intercountry and general adoption registers open for eight weeks next month, I expect that the government will receive many hundreds of applications during this window of opportunity. To cope with that demand, my Department of Child Safety is in the process of recruiting additional adoption contract workers to increase the capacity of the system to be able to complete assessments. We are also seeking more external reviewers to increase the transparency of the decisions and the quality of assessments that are made.

I moved urgently to address the age issue ahead of the opening of expressions of interest because I believe it is imperative that more Queensland families have the opportunity to express an interest in being assessed as prospective adoptive parents. It is also in the best interests of children for there to be a reasonable pool of approved applicants to match with children requiring families in Queensland.

Can I say today that there is a lack of evidence linking adoption outcomes to any particular age range. In fact, people are generally starting families later than they did in the 1960s, when Queensland's adoption legislation was first drafted. Yet people seeking to create their families through adoption were not being given the same opportunities to delay parenthood by a few extra years. That has now gone. I must emphasise that applicants wishing to adopt a child from overseas will still need to meet the eligibility requirements, including age, for the specific country from which they are hoping to adopt a child. I am continuing to progress the adoption legislation review and I look forward to its finalisation over the next four months.

There will also be an important opportunity for further public comment once a draft bill is released. I thank all members of parliament for the input they have given to me on these important decisions. I know that I now look forward to bringing further important changes to adoptions in Queensland.