



Speech by

Hon. Mike Reynolds

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Wednesday, 10 November 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Education Support Plans

Hon. M.F. REYNOLDS (Townsville—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.15 a.m.): I was very pleased to announce last week the success of an important joint initiative by my Department of Child Safety and Education Queensland to improve education outcomes for children in care. Ninety-one per cent of the 2,328 children and young people in the care of the state and currently enrolled in state schools are now being helped by individualised education support plans and work is progressing as quickly as possible on plans for the remaining nine per cent of these students.

Research shows that, traditionally, children in care do not perform as well as their peers when it comes to education. This tendency is reflected at a national and international level. However, I am confident that these plans will greatly enhance educational opportunities for these students by creating a more stable and consistent experience at school.

The education support plan, developed in January this year, acts as an early warning mechanism for schools and carers to identify factors that may undermine the education of a student who is in care and is designed to improve participation and retention rates. The plan is a formal document that identifies the child's educational goals, the strategies and resources required to meet those goals and who is responsible for implementing the strategies. Schools take a leading role in bringing together the child in care, carers, parents and Child Safety service centre staff to develop the plans. An indigenous worker or representatives from other support agencies may also be involved.

The Department of Child Safety is liaising with the independent schools sector about the development of education support plans. Catholic schools have already begun developing individual plans for students in care. This joint departmental initiative between Child Safety and Education Queensland is largely the result of a February 2003 report into the performance of children in care in Queensland schools entitled *Educating children and young people in the care of the state*. The working partnership between the two departments is an important cross-government commitment to the positive reform of the child protection system in Queensland. This can only improve the educational outcomes for vulnerable children and young people in care.