



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 13 May 2004

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Commissioner for Children and Young People

Hon. P.D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (9.41 a.m.): I am delighted to advise the House that Dr Robin Sullivan will be reappointed as Commissioner for Children and Young People for the next three years until 31 May 2007. Dr Sullivan, a former teacher who became Deputy Director-General of Education, has held the position since 1 April 1999. The Commissioner for Children and Young People will be pivotal in our efforts to give Queensland children the best possible protection, and cabinet has decided that Dr Sullivan should continue in the role to maintain the momentum of reform.

Her first five years in the role coincided with probably the most tumultuous period for child protection in the history of Queensland. While we have all been repelled by revelations of child abuse and system failure not just in government but in other major institutions such as churches, this painful period has prompted improvements in administration, systems and resources for child safety and has raised community awareness of the extreme vulnerability of children. Throughout this period, Dr Sullivan has been assiduous and independent in upholding the interests of children and young people. With her leadership, the Commission for Children and Young People has risen to the mammoth task of implementing the blue card employee and volunteer screening system.

I am delighted with her reappointment. I thank Dr Sullivan for the contribution she has made. There are more details in my ministerial statement, which I seek leave to incorporate in *Hansard*, particularly the aspects relating to the issue of blue cards. She has done a good job and I hope she has the full support of all members of this House.

Leave granted.

Since the blue card began three years ago, the commission has issued more than 212,000 blue cards and delivered almost 100 negative notices to people who are not fit to work or volunteer with children.

More than 350 applicants have withdrawn from the process after the commission challenged them about their criminal history.

Her new term as commissioner will bring heightened duties for Dr Sullivan.

Some of these arise from the government's commitment to implement all 110 recommendations of the Crime and Misconduct Commission's Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Foster Care in Queensland.

The CMC recommended the commissioner have stronger oversight and reporting roles in the child protection system; the commission assume the functions of the new Child Guardian, to investigate matters regarding children within the jurisdiction of the Department of Child Safety and review administrative decisions of that department; the commissioner have broader jurisdiction relating to child deaths; and the Community Visitor Program be expanded to include all children in alternative care, including foster care.

Independent of these CMC recommendations, I announced last month we will extend the blue card system to cover new categories of people working and volunteering with children—such as more clergy, more non-teaching school staff, and people involved in children's sports programs and camps.

As the government announced on Monday, the commissioner will also have a role in preventing convicted paedophiles from driving and operating buses & taxis.

Our institutions, laws and systems are being transformed to give children better protection from abuse and predation.

I welcome Robin Sullivan's willingness to continue a key role in an improving system for the next three years.