



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 2 November 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Annual Reports

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier and Minister for Trade) (11.31 am), by leave: I tabled this morning the annual report of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, and I want to make some comments about that. I did not want to rush things this morning. I was aware there was a private member's bill to be introduced, and I wanted to ensure that appropriate attention is given to this annual report.

The annual report reflects the first full year of operation of the commission's new systemic monitoring and review responsibilities and the expanded Community Visitor Program. The changes have enabled better monitoring of the child safety system and strengthened the commission's ability to promote, protect and report on the rights, interests and wellbeing of Queensland's most vulnerable children and young people.

During the year, the commission established the Strategic Policy and Research Program to focus on prevention and targeted early intervention strategies for at-risk children and young people. In 2005-06, the commission conducted a major statewide advertising campaign to raise awareness of the expansion of categories of regulated employment and business requiring a blue card. The commission issued 219,886 blue cards in 2005-06, an increase of 24 per cent from 2004-05. During the year, the success of the blue card system was demonstrated by the fact that 175 applicants were issued with negative notices and therefore prohibited from working with children and young people. The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2006 was also enacted, requiring regulated businesses and employers to have written risk management strategies in place from 1 January 2007 and further streamlining and expanding the blue card operations.

Mr Speaker, as you would know, this is the second year that the commission has produced an annual report of the Child Death Case Review Committee and a *Report on the Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland*. The Minister for Child Safety has already referred to this, but I want to emphasise its importance.

The Child Death Case Review Committee is required to conduct external reviews of the Department of Child Safety's child death case reviews when the child who died was known to the Department of Child Safety in the three years before his or her death. The committee has reviewed 40 of the 46 internal reviews conducted by the Department of Child Safety, examining 51 deaths. The committee made a series of recommendations based on these reviews. As at 30 June 2006, the department's responses to 12 of the 40 reviews had been assessed and accepted by the committee. The remaining 28 responses are currently under review by the committee, with no significant concerns identified to date.

The *Report on the Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland* examines child deaths in Queensland and makes recommendations to minimise risk factors associated with deaths that may have been preventable. The report notes progress being made with the implementation of recommendations contained in the 2004-05 report and makes a number of key recommendations based on its work during 2005-06 which will be considered by the government in consultation with key stakeholders. The report also

notes that, during the period, the number of child deaths registered in Queensland had decreased by 11 per cent from 2004-05.

This is an area of enormous sensitivity. We have worked as hard as we can to improve this system. This is an area that has been neglected under successive governments for most of Queensland's history. My government has been the first to tackle it head-on, as you would know, Mr Speaker, being a former minister of that department. All ministers who have occupied this portfolio since I have been Premier have been responsible for significant reform and significant achievement, and I congratulate and thank all of them. But this is not a matter for the government to be praising itself on. Far from it, and I do not do that.

I want to highlight, however, that we are a government with compassion, and we are determined to improve in this area. We know it is an area of enormous difficulty. It is one of those areas that is at the raw edge of human behaviour. This matter is concerning and the *Courier-Mail* has reported on it appropriately. I have no criticism of that reporting; the *Courier-Mail* should keep the government on its mettle in this area, and I have no criticism of that.

The point I make, however, is that everyone in the community and everyone in society has an obligation to protect children. We would not need a Department of Child Safety if there was not abuse of children. There is no excuse for abuse—no excuse—and those who are the abusers in the community should not only hang their head in shame; they should rethink their behaviour.

We are wearing white ribbons today to highlight our opposition to domestic violence. We have to continue to change the culture of our society so that violence is not acceptable. Violence is not acceptable in a domestic situation and it is never acceptable against children. If we can change people's attitude towards how children are treated, we would not have the level of abuse that we have now. I know that the state inevitably ends up with caring quite appropriately and quite rightly for the most endangered children—many in high risk and across the spectrum in terms of health and abuse. What we need to do, though, is change people's attitudes.

There are some other matters relating to other annual reports that I would like to highlight, and I seek leave to incorporate the last few paragraphs in *Hansard*.

Leave granted.

The Major Sports Facilities Authority portfolio consists of six venues, representing over \$913m in assets. Key achievements of the Authority during 2005-06 include:

- more than \$12m of upgrades to Dairy Farmers Stadium, increasing seating capacity to 26,000 and developing this facility into a world class, regional Stadium; and
- completion of the sixth and final stage of the \$40m redevelopment of the Gabba, increasing capacity to 42,000 and providing more function and corporate spaces.

Twelve athletes who train at The Sleeman Centre won a total of 21 medals, including ten gold, at the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne. This is a wonderful achievement which is testament to the excellent facilities available to help Queensland's elite athletes excel.

The Authority will be focussing on improving these facilities in 2006-07, with the construction of the a \$10m state of the art rehabilitation and hydrotherapy facility at the Queensland Sport and Athletics Centre; and the \$160m, 25,000 seat rectangular stadium at Robina, Gold Coast scheduled for completion prior to the commencement of the NRL 2008 season.

Mr Speaker, these reports are indicative of the work undertaken by the Government over the past year. I commend these reports to the House.