



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Wednesday, 7 March 2007

MOTION: HEALTH OF QUEENSLAND SCHOOLCHILDREN

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (5.50 pm): As the Minister for Child Safety and as Acting Minister for Health, I am pleased to second the amendment to the motion. In fact Queensland Health is at the forefront of the Beattie government's efforts to ensure that Queensland children live healthy and active lives. As a result of the Queensland Obesity Summit, held in May 2006 and which I attended, the Beattie government committed \$21 million over three years for partnerships, grants, facilities and other resources to encourage our children to live healthy lifestyles and help fight obesity.

Key initiatives included developing healthy weight information packs to be mailed to every Queensland home to increase awareness about food and nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight; and a Fit and Fuelled in Schools program that includes healthy food and drink supply for tuckshops and grants to promote physical activity. In 2005 we also launched an Eat Well, Be Active—Healthy Kids for Life strategy, which has over 100 initiatives for healthier children. One of these initiatives is a Healthy Kids for Life survey underway in Queensland schools to measure the eating habits and physical activity of Queensland children. The Healthy Kids for Life program seeks to create an environment that helps children and young people to be active and eat well.

And our Go for 2&5 fruit and vegetable campaign is paying dividends by encouraging Queenslanders to eat two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables a day. Queensland Health surveyed 2,500 Queenslanders last year and compared the results with a baseline survey taken before the Go for 2&5 campaign started in 2005. For those who sometimes doubt the benefits of government advertising, the results are instructive. The results show that Queenslanders are getting the message about a healthy daily intake of fruit and vegetables. More than 72 per cent of those surveyed were familiar with the campaign and 27 per cent said that they had made an effort to eat more fruit and vegetables. The survey also found a 10 per cent increase in those eating three or more serves of vegetables per day and a five per cent increase in those eating fruit more than four days a week.

In my portfolio of Child Safety there is another initiative to improve the health of children. A new system of child health passports was launched in January 2007 and will help to better manage and treat the multiple health problems of children who come into care. A six-month trial highlighted the need for the new system, which is a joint initiative of the Department of Child Safety and Queensland Health. Queensland is again taking the national lead in child protection reform.

The child safety passport is the first of its kind in Australia for children in care. Children who spend time in out-of-home care as a result of abuse or neglect generally have poorer health than other children. Children who have been abused often come to us with no medical records. With the child health passport, each child entering care will undergo a full check-up. A health plan will then be developed to meet the child's needs.

For as long as the child remains in care the health plan will be reviewed at least yearly and more often if required. The health plan, medical records and information on how to meet the day-to-day health needs of the child will be contained in what is called the child health passport. A copy of the passport will

be given to any new carer or to the parent if the child returns home. The child health passport is now being progressively implemented for all children in our care.

Through Queensland Health's Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services we invest more than \$50 million every year in the prevention and treatment of drug and alcohol misuse. And we are also making it harder for young Queenslanders to take up the habit of smoking. In fact, we have the toughest smoking laws in Australia, and these are helping to reduce smoking rates across the board in Queensland.

The honourable member also raised the question of whether all Queensland schools should keep a register providing information on the immunisation status of all attending children. While on the topic of immunisation, I would like to inform the House that Queensland's new school based vaccination program for 2007 has already begun. In fact, this year starting in April the program will roll out the first free vaccinations against cervical cancer to Queensland's schoolgirls. The vaccine was first developed by Queenslanders of the Year Professor Ian Frazer and could save the lives of hundreds of Queensland women. The cervical cancer vaccinations will be provided to female students with parental consent in years 10, 11 and 12 this school year. Next year it will be offered to girls in years 8, 9 and 10. I join the opposition in its concern for the health and safety of our children.

Time expired.