



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Thursday, 8 March 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Child Safety, Practice Development and Support Branch

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.17 am): Child safety officers make very difficult decisions every day of their work lives. These decisions are not happy ones. They work with vulnerable, damaged, crisis-ridden, unhappy and angry families. The children they work to protect are frequently confused, have health problems or disabilities, behaviour problems and may themselves be sad, angry or rebellious, and with older children and adolescents with a long history of family dysfunction the case work can be particularly difficult.

Child safety officers are routinely criticised by members of the families involved, foster-carers, media and by members of the public who mean well but have little factual basis for the conclusions they reach. As the number of child protection notifications increases and the number of children in care continues to climb at a time when human services professionals are in short supply, the Department of Child Safety is, especially in rural and remote areas, short-staffed.

In this climate it is important that our child safety officers are supported with the latest and best information on practice from around the world, that they have access to expert advice and that they are supported with supervision and professional development not only for their own careers but also, more importantly, to ensure that they provide our vulnerable children with the best service we can offer. I am pleased, therefore, to announce that I have approved \$600,000 for a new Practice Development and Support Branch for the Department of Child Safety. This new branch will comprise a team of high-level experts who will support child safety officers all over Queensland in the urban and regional centres and in the rural and remote areas.

Recruitment will start soon to bring this team together. They will provide latest, best practice information and advice, provide a phone-in support service for child safety officers and offer practical mentoring to team leaders and senior practitioners. They will also assist staff to review case plans, identify areas for improvement and showcase examples of good practice. The new Practice Development and Support Branch will play a key role as we continue to build Queensland's world-class child protection system.