



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Tuesday, 13 March 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Foster and Kinship Care Week

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.12 am): This is Foster and Kinship Care Week. I am sure all members will join me in congratulating the state's foster-carers. They are a devoted group of people who go out of their way to provide a safe home to kids who need some certainty in their lives. While carers tell me looking after vulnerable children is a rewarding experience, I know it is not always smooth sailing. Children in foster care may behave differently because of abuse they have suffered or they may have specialist medical needs.

Foster-carers know that help is available to them during business hours—they are able to call their local Child Safety Service Centre for help. However, problems can arise at any time, not just between 9 am to 5 pm on Monday to Friday. If there is a crisis, foster-carers can call the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre, but unless there is a genuine crisis foster-carers are reluctant to call this emergency service. There is a gap here in the support services that foster-carers need.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce that I have approved \$200,000 to establish a new hotline for Queensland's foster-carers. The hotline number—1300550877—will be operational within weeks and will be staffed from 7 am to 11.30 pm on weekends and from 5 pm to 11.30 pm on weekdays. For the cost of a local call from anywhere in Queensland foster-carers will be able to access support and advice. The hotline is another step towards a better deal for our foster-carers. Earlier this year we increased their allowances and they now receive between \$370 and \$434 a fortnight tax free for each child in their care. I recently wrote to every carer in Queensland to thank them for their commitment and to update them on where we are heading. In a few hours I will present excellence awards to seven special foster families who have demonstrated outstanding service. I congratulate them for their dedication and I congratulate all of our foster-carers. It could be argued that no job matters more.