



Speech by

# Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Tuesday, 5 June 2007

---

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Child Safety

**Hon. D BOYLE** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.22 am): Yesterday the Treasurer and I announced a multimillion-dollar package to better protect Indigenous children in remote communities. The Child Safety budget includes \$15.5 million for capital costs and over \$19 million for operating costs to fund two major initiatives. One is to establish safe houses for children in remote Indigenous communities and the other is to move Child Safety officers closer to those communities.

At present, Child Safety officers who service the cape live in Cairns and fly across this huge region to the communities for short periods. To be frank, this method of service has been far from ideal. Therefore, in cooperation with the communities, my department will establish accommodation for Child Safety officers and branch offices will be located in Weipa, Cooktown and Thursday Island so that Child Safety staff can live and work near the communities they serve. It will be much easier for officers to form ties with the local communities and to work with elders to get the community involved in child protection. It will be easier to keep an eye on children at risk of harm or abuse.

On the topic of safe houses, I am pleased to say that the first of at least five will be established at Kowanyama and Doomadgee where the councils were first off the mark to offer land. Others will be set up at Pormpuraaw, Aurukun and Weipa/Napranum, and another on Palm Island.

Too often in the past we have had to move kids out of their communities for their own protection, but that in itself has placed added stress on children who have known no other community or way of life. Safe houses will give abused children a temporary place to stay within their communities, close to their extended family and friends while their longer term needs are being assessed. Safe houses will also provide longer term residential care for children who are unable to return to their families.