



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Hansard Tuesday, 21 August 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Reforming Child Protection

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.27 am): The Crime and Misconduct Commission recently released a report card on how this government has gone in reforming child protection. The report, *Reforming child protection in Queensland*, summed up our efforts as 'commendable, although there is more work still to be done'. The CMC rightly pointed out that problems exist not because of a lack of policy intent or financial commitment but because there are obstacles that are difficult to overcome. For instance, the CMC mentioned the difficulties in servicing remote Indigenous communities. This is, and has always been, true. Following the lessons learnt from a difficult child protection case in a remote community, we recently announced a multimillion-dollar initiative to base more Child Safety staff closer to remote Indigenous communities in the cape and the gulf and to establish safe houses.

The CMC also pointed to the problems of attracting and retaining staff, particularly in remote areas and this, too, is true. The department has developed an incentives package for staff working in rural and remote areas, including rent assistance and an annual bonus of \$10,000 a year. The CMC report, which covered the period to December 2006, said most, but not all, of its recommendations had been implemented. That was true at the time. In March this year the department implemented all 110 CMC recommendations.

These criticisms notwithstanding, the CMC also recognised and praised the broad achievements of the new department. CMC chairperson, Robert Needham, said the department 'shows a resilience that was lacking in the old Department of Families' and 'seems to have a greater capacity to identify failings in its operations and come up with remedies to fix these problems'. He said the state government had 'shown remarkable commitment to improving child protection services in Queensland'. None of this could have been achieved without our hardworking staff and I thank them all for the huge amount of work done over the last three years. There will always be more to do, but the Beattie government is well on the way to delivering a world-class child protection system.