



Speech by

Hon. Desley Boyle

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Safety Department

Hon. D BOYLE (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety) (10.20 am): I would like to inform the House about an interesting new strategy which should strengthen ties between the Department of Child Safety and the legal profession. Two law students recently spent a month working at the Brown Plains Child Safety Service Centre. From all reports it was a win-win situation. Child Safety staff benefited from their legal expertise and the students, both law graduates, gained valuable practical experience. In fact, the one-month stint counted towards their Graduate Diploma of Legal Practice which they must complete if they want to practise law.

These law graduates were certainly kept busy. They assisted in the preparation, research and drafting of applications and supporting affidavits for the Children's Court; they assisted as note takers at family group meetings and court ordered conferences; they assisted in a project to locate parents who had been difficult to contact; they assisted in preparing and coordinating matters to be mentioned at court; they assisted in trial preparation, post court tasks and drafting correspondence to external stakeholders; and, in a real bonus for the students, they both had an opportunity to appear at court after leave was granted by the magistrate. It is hoped that this initiative can now be repeated in Child Safety service centres across the state. As I have said, our staff gain by having someone assisting in court preparation and law students gain by improving their practical skills and their understanding of child protection legislation.

There is another benefit over and above these considerations. Sometimes people, including members of the legal fraternity, have misconceptions about the work of Child Safety officers. By spending a month in a Child Safety service centre, law students will have a much greater insight into and respect for the challenges faced by our front-line staff. In this way we can truly strengthen the relationship between solicitors and Child Safety workers. After all, our common goal should always be the protection of children.