



Speech by

Jason O'Brien

MEMBER FOR COOK

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

ADOPTION OF CHILDREN AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1) 2007

Mr O'BRIEN (Cook—ALP) (9.00 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion moved by the member for Currumbin. The level of fees for adoption being set by the Adoption of Children Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007 are affordable and will see the government continuing to subsidise the majority of the costs of operating the various adoption programs. Tonight I want to talk specifically about adoption contract workers, who really are at the coalface of the debate that we are engaging in this evening. In a clear indication that the government is listening to the concerns of those involved with intercountry adoptions, the fees for adoption contract workers have been revised. A number of people made submissions to the regulatory impact statement about the fees the department pays to adoption contract workers which have not been reviewed since 2002.

Postplacement supervision includes the engagement of an assessment contract worker to undertake interviews and produce a written assessment. The adoption contract worker visits the home on a quarterly basis over the first year to monitor the child's progress, including their adjustment to the new environment, new culture and adoptive family. The child's physical and emotional health, growth and social development are assessed and recorded. Reports are provided to Adoption Services Queensland on a quarterly basis for monitoring and for provision to the country of origin. At the end of 12 months these reports are used to inform the decision maker in determining if a final order will be approved.

Adoption contract workers are qualified social workers, psychologists and other professionals who are engaged by the department to undertake the complex assessment that is necessary to determine the suitability of applicants to be adoptive parents. I think that is a point that has been forgotten, unfortunately, in the debate tonight. There is a lot of work done to ensure that those parents are the right parents and that they are doing the right thing. That is certainly the role of the adoption contract workers. Their role has certainly been underplayed in the debate this evening.

It is pleasing to note that the Department of Child Safety has responded to this feedback and a review of the fees paid to adoption contract workers has commenced. We as a government accept that if the department is to retain experienced workers and attract new ones it is imperative the fees represent a fair payment for the work that is involved. I am advised that this review will be completed in time for the outcome to be considered in the 2008-09 budget cycle.

The Adoption of Children Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007 sets the fees for adoption at a reasonable and affordable level while at the same time reduces the level of government subsidy that is necessary for the Department of Child Safety to administer the intercountry and relative adoption programs. For this reason, I commend the Adoption of Children Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2007 to the House and oppose the motion that the regulation be disallowed.