



Speech by

# Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 10 October 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Department of Child Safety

**Hon. MM KEECH** (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women) (10.06 am): Honourable members may be aware of the recent death of a two-year-old Margate boy. The death of any child is an absolute tragedy and my heart goes out to all those suffering as a result of this terrible incident. A man has been charged and the case is before the courts. That means I am limited in what I am able to say about this issue.

What I can confirm is that the child was known to the Department of Child Safety. There will be a two-step, independent review of the department's actions in this case. It starts with a mandatory department review which is conducted by outside experts. In this case, an independent reviewer with 10 years experience conducting sensitive investigations has been appointed and the department is collecting any files and other material related to its involvement with the child.

That independent review, as well as any proposed departmental response to its recommendations, is then looked at by the external Child Death Case Review Committee which is chaired by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian and includes the police commissioner and senior health experts. That committee can make further recommendations and any recommendations from the review will be made public. If there are any recommendations out of this review for doing things differently or better I have given a commitment that they will be carefully considered by the department and implemented.

The investigation following a tragedy is not about apportioning blame. It is about retracing the steps we took in dealing with the case, determining whether those steps were appropriate in the circumstances, whether we could have done things better and whether we should do things better in the future. The Department of Child Safety has gone through major reform over the past three years and the period of improvement will continue.

The department now has a budget of more than half a billion dollars, an increase of \$48 million on last year and more than triple that of four years ago. This budget increase, along with the implementation of all 110 CMC recommendations, shows a clear commitment by this government to protecting Queensland children. When travelling around Queensland and visiting many of the departmental officers can I say how impressed I am by the people who work at the front line to protect Queensland's most vulnerable children. I recognise that their work is challenging. It is very difficult and very demanding work. On behalf of the Bligh government, I thank them for the very important work they do and thank them for protecting Queensland's most vulnerable children.