



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Tuesday, 16 October 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Foster and Kinship-Carers

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women) (10.23 am): During my short time as Minister for Child Safety I have been impressed by the passion and commitment shown by foster and kinship-carers. These caring, compassionate people are the backbone of Queensland's child protection system. The Department of Child Safety could not do its job without them. I know the work of foster and kinship-carers is often difficult, but it brings wonderful rewards. Because of their dedication and generosity, more than 7,000 Queensland children are now in a place where they are loved, cared for, safe and nurtured.

I have heard of examples of how the love and support of carers is helping vulnerable Queensland children reach their full potential. In one case I was advised how a child who had come from a home in which he was sexually, emotionally and physically abused has grown from a frightened little boy into a competent and confident young man. After seven years with the same foster family, he is doing very well at school and working towards a trade career. His carers and teachers say that he is well behaved, stable, responsible and healthy. That is why he is among a number of students at his school selected to travel overseas on an excursion as a reward for good attendance and excellent behaviour. It is an opportunity this young man may never have had if not for the kindness and love of his long-term foster family.

Carers give so much to so many Queensland children. If not for the compassion of one foster family, three sisters sent into care would have been forced to separate. These generous and loving people had not planned to take on so many foster-children, but seeing how important it was for them to remain together, they opened their hearts and their home. The girls say they have grown into happy, healthy young women because their foster-parents gave them the chance to grow up together in a loving environment.

I also give special thanks to those heroic carers who take on the often difficult job of caring for children with profound disabilities and illness. On behalf of the Bligh government, I applaud Queensland's foster and kinship-carers who give our most vulnerable and at-risk children the chance to live happy, healthy, fulfilled lives.