



Speech by

Hon. Margaret Keech

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Child Safety, Annual Report

Hon. MM KEECH (Albert—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Women) (10.19 am): The Department of Child Safety works hard to ensure that when children are at risk of harm we do all that we can to keep families together. But if parents cannot or will not protect their children, then we must ensure that the safety and wellbeing of the children comes first. I am pleased to announce that Queensland's at risk children are set to benefit from more than \$80 million in new and renewed funding from the Bligh government over the next three years. The funding boost from the Department of Child Safety will go to 46 out-of-home care placement services for children and young people in the child protection system. This money will mean that there are another 596 places available for children who most desperately need our care and support. This is the second largest funding round announced by the department and I know that it will make a positive difference in the lives of many young people.

In the past three years we have trebled the department's budget and doubled the number of front-line staff. We have also successfully implemented every single one of the CMC's 110 recommendations. I place a very high value on the work that our community partners, including foster-carers and kinship-carers, do for children who are victims of abuse or neglect at home. They do an absolutely terrific job and, thanks to them, these children have a safe place to live and the prospect of a much better life. Funded services will provide a range of out-of-home care options, including specialist foster care, residential care, supported independent living, and foster and kinship care.

The funding process focused on finding better ways of caring for Indigenous children and young people who are significantly overrepresented in the child protection system. We sought and received submissions from a number of Indigenous organisations to meet the specific cultural needs of vulnerable Indigenous children and young people. The funding will also support our efforts to recruit more Indigenous carers and ensure that the child's cultural identity is maintained.

Child protection is everyone's business. No government can by itself eliminate cruelty to children. However, the government is focused on reducing the risks of harm to children and young people. To that end, I am very pleased to table the annual report of the Department of Child Safety for the 2006-07 financial year.

Tabled paper: Department of Child Safety Annual Report 2006-07.

I am proud of the good work that the department is doing in continuing its improvement to protecting Queensland's vulnerable children as outlined in the report. I recognise the amazing job that the departmental staff do every single day in protecting our young people.