



Speech by

Mandy Johnstone

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

ADOPTION BILL

Ms JOHNSTONE (Townsville—ALP) (4.27 pm): I am pleased to support the Adoption Bill 2009. I have been through the papers and I am pleased to support the process whereby there will be a more open adoption practice, which I think is very good, to allow children some more grounding by knowing who they are and where they come from. This bill in particular allows for an important provision and that is that children in the child protection system will be able to be adopted. Whilst reunification is obviously always the priority, adoption will be available and able to be used in a minority of cases to secure a permanent family for a child in the child protection system. This will be available when the department has weighed up the benefits of different placement types and determined adoption is the best option for promoting the particular child's long-term security and wellbeing.

Adoption will be pursued for children subject to child protection orders only when it can be justified to a court that it is the best and preferred option for securing a child's long-term needs. This will be based on a child's individual needs and circumstances. Adoption provides a child with a legally secure family situation, both in childhood and in adulthood, and may be arranged with approval for ongoing contact between a child's birth and adoptive families in circumstances where this is in the child's best interests. Adoption provides children with a family situation that may appear very similar to the majority of other families in the community. Although adoption has lifelong implications, it is a one-off, permanent legal event, allowing child and family an opportunity to get on with their lives and move forward. After the making of an adoption order, there is no further legal monitoring or intervention and no variation of the arrangement is possible. Therefore, adoption provides the child and adoptive parents with real certainty about their circumstances and future.

Securing adoptive placements for children where adoption is assessed as the best option to meet their needs will enhance the effectiveness of the government's innovative One Chance at Childhood initiative. This initiative aims to provide stability for children in their crucial early years of development and to avoid the danger of children 'drifting' between parents and numerous foster-care placements. This is just one element of the reform but it is an important one, and one that is working well for many Queensland children, that shows maturity of both adoption and child protection practices. I am pleased to see that the bill, for the first time in Queensland, will support the integration of these two practices. I look forward to this providing better outcomes for children where adoption is the best possible option. I commend the bill to the House.