



Speech by

Hon. Phil Reeves

MEMBER FOR MANSFIELD

Hansard Tuesday, 10 November 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

One Chance at Childhood

Hon. PG REEVES (Mansfield—ALP) (Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport) (10.21 am): The Bligh government is committed to innovative programs for Queensland's children and young people. This includes programs like the One Chance at Childhood initiative for children from zero to four years of age. The aim of the program is unashamedly to put the needs of young children first and to give babies and toddlers some stability in their young lives, because they only get one chance at childhood.

We cannot put a time limit on decisions about a child's long-term care. The reality is that decisions about a child's long-term care are not taken lightly, and never should be. The One Chance at Childhood program recognises that and provides expert advice to support front-line child safety officers who are faced with those considerations. This initiative is not 'one size fits all' and must be responsive to the individual needs of individual cases. Everything is done in the best interests of the individual child.

If parents are working well to resume the care of their child, child safety staff will support them to keep their child safe. However, it is a sad fact that there are times when reunification for a child in care is not possible and never will be. In these cases, children and young people need stability and permanency. Research recognises that children need stability in their living arrangements and relationships to reach their physical, emotional, social and intellectual potential.

The Queensland government is delivering on its commitment to child protection by supporting programs like One Chance at Childhood. The government has made the tough decision to support front-line services and increase the child safety budget to a record \$638 million this year. On the other hand, the LNP would have cut three per cent from the child safety budget. That equates to a loss of at least 170 front-line child safety roles.

The One Chance at Childhood program and its dedicated staff are ensuring our children and young people can reach their full potential. I want to assure families, child safety staff and the community that this vital program will continue to operate.