



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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CHILD SAFETY; SPORT

Ms DARLING (Sandgate—ALP) (11.45 am): The Bligh government is committed to protecting our most vulnerable community members, our children. I would like to pay tribute to all of the dedicated individuals and families that make up our child protection system in Queensland. Last Saturday I was joined by my colleague, the Honourable Phil Reeves, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport, on the final day of National Child Protection Week as we hosted the Bracken Ridge Foster Family Fun Day. Child protection is everybody's responsibility. In Queensland more than 7,500 children are unable to live at home, but thanks to people such as the dedicated carers I met last week and our child safety officers and workers, those children are able to live in a loving and caring environment.

I admire the valuable role our foster and kinship carers play in the lives of our children and young people. They open their hearts and their homes to provide stability to those who need it most. Organisations such as Foster Care Queensland, the Create Foundation, Families Plus and the Pyjama Foundation joined in the celebrations, as did the departmental staff who organised the day. I thank them all for their valuable work. I met some wonderful families, including two couples from Bracken Ridge who care for young people with special needs, Glenda and Ian, and Pamela and Ian. The smiles across the faces of their children showed me what a big difference those humble people make to the lives of those in care.

National Child Protection Week is about raising awareness of child protection issues across Australia. The Bligh government is committed to child protection in Queensland. This financial year we have seen a record investment of \$638 million in child protection in Queensland. In the past two years alone, 60 new child safety officers have been employed. This investment acknowledges the importance we place on keeping our children safe. This is an investment in our future.

Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland is the blueprint for our future and discusses ways we can have a Queensland that is strong, green, smart, healthy and fair. The government and our non-government partners and carers are committed to ensuring our kids have the best start in education, improving their health and wellbeing, and giving them access to all the support they need. The Bligh government has delivered improved literacy and numeracy support. While there is still more work to be done, the improvements are already evident in the NAPLAN results and I congratulate teachers, families and students. The introduction of the prep year and the 240 new and expanded kindergartens due by 2014 demonstrate the importance of early years education. By the time our first preppies reach year 3, I know the \$90 million literacy strategy will place our students up with the best in the country.

Providing for more than 1,000 extra doctors and 2,000 extra nurses over the past two years goes a long way to helping Queenslanders reach the target of being Australia's healthiest people. However, achieving this is also up to the individual and we all need to find our 30 minutes of physical activity each day and eat five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit each day. I thank the parents, carers and teachers who go a long way to helping children understand the need to keep themselves healthy. The new children's hospital and the expanded paediatric network also will be very welcomed by all families. As both Minister for Child Safety and Minister for Sport, the Hon. Phil Reeves understands the importance of keeping kids safe and healthy.

I turn to the other side of Minister Reeves's portfolio to congratulate all of our Queensland sporting teams on some fantastic spectator sport last weekend. Even though I am a Brisbane girl, the battle between the two top-class Queensland teams, the Broncos and the Titans, was a win for Queensland and a win for sport. On Friday night I was a little disappointed to see the Lions exit the finals, but Lions fans have been thrilled to see our team in the final six. Congratulations to Michael Voss on such an incredible result in his first year of coaching.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Channel 10 for its coverage of the netball on Sunday. It was a great win for our Australian team. Netball has a huge participation rate in Queensland and the telecast on a commercial network is a boost to the sport's followers. I congratulate everybody who got out, strapped on a pair of boots or a pair of running shoes and enjoyed the great Queensland outdoors and took a little time to get fit and healthy and find their 30 minutes over the weekend.