




Speech By
Deb Frecklington

MEMBER FOR NANANGO

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2016

MOTION

Child Protection

 **Mrs FRECKLINGTON** (Nanango—LNP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (6.21 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion of no confidence in the Minister for Child Safety. It is interesting to hear the minister who just resumed his seat trying to rewrite history. It was the LNP in government that made the largest ever investment in child safety—\$406 million—after the findings of the Carmody review.

The minister continues to lead this department from crisis to crisis. In the former minister's last year in the position, 77 new front-line staff were put on in Child Safety. Currently only 40 per cent of staff in this department are front line. These facts and figures need to be put on the table. The data is there. We can rely upon the data from when the LNP was in government.

This motion is about the competence of the minister, who is not able to handle her department. As we heard from the shadow minister, this minister has run Child Safety into the ground. Vulnerable children are being placed at risk by the department that is there to protect them. As a mother I am just appalled to think that this department, which is supposed to protect our most vulnerable children, is being let down by a minister who insists on blaming others.

We know for a fact that in some regions investigations into abuse reports are almost at a standstill when it comes to on-time commencement. When they do start, more than 60 per cent of cases are now taking longer than ever to be finalised. We have a minister who is more interested in sacking child safety officers than in fixing the systemic issues in her department across the state. In the Far North, 40 per cent of abuse reports needing urgent, 24-hour investigation are not even starting. This includes in the electorates of Cook and Cairns. That is 40 per cent of children suspected of being abused, who need critical action—right now—in their electorates who are being missed. That is a national disgrace and a complete failure of the many young Indigenous children across the cape. It is more than enough evidence for the members for Cook and Cairns to support this no-confidence motion.

The crisis in child safety is not confined to investigations. Our carers continue to walk away from the system as the number of kids in care continues to grow. This is completely contrary to the intent of child protection reform. This is a minister who says that everything is fine yet has no idea what is going on in her own department. As a minister of the Crown, she is there to look after and run her department, not blame everyone else. The crisis is shown on a daily basis on the front pages of our state newspaper, yet it is still the fault of everyone but the minister who has been charged with running her department. The rot has set in on the other side of the chamber. After the Carmody report was handed down, the LNP made the largest injection of funds to the child safety department—\$406 million. Those opposite cannot even run that department.

This minister was sidelined by her own Premier after revelations in relation to the tragic death of Tiahleigh Palmer. Now it seems that not only weekly but daily we open Queensland papers and see the utter chaos in Child Safety while the minister is meant to be running the department and we hear the Premier, who has sidelined the minister, saying, 'Everything is fine. We need to protect our minister.' What about the vulnerable children across Queensland who need this minister to protect them? What about the child safety officers who want some leadership from their minister? This system is completely broken down. We need someone else who is competent to look after vulnerable children in Queensland. We in this House tonight have a choice between backing this incompetent minister and getting rid of her before there is any more harm in the child protection system.

(Time expired)