




Speech By
Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2016

MOTION

Child Protection

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (6.05 pm): What a disgraceful display of politics this is! All of us in this place know well the rough and tumble nature of politics. However, there are those things that are, and should always remain, above politics—the welfare of the most vulnerable, Queensland children being the most important.

The record of this government and the record of this minister on child safety has been one of growing services for families and a growing workforce to help families and protect children in this state. We are employing 129 new child safety staff this financial year. We have provided over 150,000 hours of training to more than 3,750 staff—more staff and better trained staff. On top of this, more than 230 new jobs have already been created in the community sector since 2015 and we will create another 400 over the next two years. These jobs in the community sector are being created as we expand help available to vulnerable families. There is an amount of \$52.2 million over five years for new local Family and Child Connect services that allow any Queenslanders to access free help and parenting support. More than 15,000 families have been referred for help through these new services.

Investment under this government and under this minister continues. There is an amount of \$195 million over five years for local intensive family support services for those families that need extra wraparound support to keep children safe. In addition, this year the minister announced a further \$60 million over four years for intensive, grassroots family and child support on top of the \$150 million already committed over five years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing services that the minister has established to make sure we are not ignoring the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families that are coming into contact with our child protection system.

That is what this government and this minister are doing to address the most vulnerable in this state and it could not be more stark to what occurred in the previous term of government under the LNP. Under the previous government, 225 child safety staff were sacked under the LNP. This does not even include temporary contracts that were not renewed. An amount of \$34 million was cut per year from child safety organisations. An amount of \$24 million was cut per year from community service organisations.

Under the Palaszczuk government we are restoring front-line services and building new ones to help Queensland parents take responsibility to care for their children. Not only have we been restoring jobs, funding and building new services, we have also removed gag clauses that the LNP put on funded organisations. What have those organisations been saying? There has been an unprecedented outpouring of support for the direction of this government and confidence in the minister at every turn. Organisations have been pleading with the opposition to stop the politicising of Queensland's child protection reforms and the important work they do. I speak of such organisations as Create Queensland, Foster Care Queensland and PeakCare and, most recently, the Queensland Child Protection Week

Committee. David Swain, Chief Operating Officer of the Churches of Christ Care, summed up concerns best when he said—

“Unfortunately, there are those in the opposition and the media who are attempting to de-stabilise the great work that is currently underway, and who are trying to make a crisis out of a change process.

“What we are embarking on through the Child and Family reform process is too important to sabotage, whether for short-term political gain or media sensationalism. There are lives at stake, and I can tell you that far more lives will be saved through continuing with the reform process than blowing it up ...

It is not just organisations speaking up, but individuals as well. Chris, a worker with more than 20 years experience as a child safety officer, spoke with Steve Austin just last week. He said, ‘I think Minister Fentiman has done an outstanding job in her tenure. This is not something one person or one government or one agency can fix. She is very active, in my experience, across her whole portfolio.’ If the LNP, and in particular the member for Mudgeeraba, will not listen to what stakeholders and Queensland’s child safety—

Mr SPEAKER: Pause the clock. Member for Nudgee, I apologise for interrupting your speech. I am having difficulty hearing you because of interjections across the chamber. I remind members that some members may still be on notice for a first warning under standing order 253A.

Ms LINARD: If the LNP, and in particular the member for Mudgeeraba, will not listen to those stakeholders or Queensland’s child safety workers, will they listen to their own words? Less than three years ago the member for Clayfield said—

Child safety is an area that has challenged governments around Australia regardless of their political persuasion. Indeed, it is rightly considered beyond politics. We all want to do the right thing, but knowing what the right thing is can be tough.

I could not agree more. The right thing is supporting our front-line workers and not playing politics. The right thing is supporting vulnerable children by being constructive, not destructive. This minister has my full support. She is absolutely passionately dedicated to vulnerable children and families in this state.