




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS

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CHILD PROTECTION REFORM AMENDMENT BILL; DIRECTOR OF CHILD PROTECTION LITIGATION BILL

 **Ms BOYD** (Pine Rivers—ALP) (5.21 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2016 and the Director of Child Protection Litigation Bill 2016. Some three years ago the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry released its report *Taking responsibility: a roadmap for Queensland child protection* which confirmed what many in the field already anecdotally knew. Along with the 121 recommendations the message was clear: the system was under immense stress and direct action was necessary. To build an effective child protection system, action needed to be taken to address systemic failings. The Palaszczuk government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the commission of inquiry as part of the child and family reform agenda. This reform will ensure that children get the best possible future, are cared for, protected and provided with a safe environment.

These bills aim to reform the court process for the better. We now know how important it is to ensure that the voices of children and their families are heard in the decisions which impact them. We know how important it is to minimise delay through these distressing times. We know how important it is to ensure that quality evidence is presented and that this evidence supports applications for child protection orders. We know how important it is for the court to make the right decision, and the measures in this bill will lead to improved outcomes.

These bills do many things, but the critical thing that I take away from this and the one that I hear about most in my community is the ability to allow for a review of a case plan. The child or long-term guardian may ask the chief executive to review the case plan if it has not been reviewed in the last 12 months. This is not a provision which is currently available to a parent or guardian. This will allow for reconsideration and potential change if there has been a change to the child's circumstances, therefore achieving the best outcome for the child at the time. Further, this clause will allow for, encourage and facilitate ongoing participation and input to case plans from guardians. The chief executive will take into consideration a request to review a case plan taking into account all factors and the best interests of the child.

We know that there are often varied and changing circumstances, and these bills aim to reform and improve the function of the Childrens Court and the quality of applications on child protection orders. They provide families and children with greater support during child protection and court proceedings; they improve the functioning of the Childrens Court; they improve the quality of applications for a protection order; and they support the establishment of the Director of Child Protection Litigation and the Office of the Child and Family Official Solicitor. The Office of the Child and Family Official Solicitor will result in child safety officers being able to access earlier and more independent legal advice. I too would like to echo the sentiments of the member for Greenslopes in acknowledging the fantastic work that child safety officers do in a very difficult space.

The net positive outcome of this will be the high-quality material and evidence which is presented to support these applications, a higher level of compliance with model litigant principals and the ability to separate front-line case management from legal work. An independent statutory agency in the Justice portfolio like the Director of Child Protection Litigation will establish greater accountability and oversight of applications being proposed by the Department of Child Safety.

There is much good that these pieces of legislation do and many reforms and initiatives that other members have covered in their speeches today that I will not have the time to cover in mine. Ultimately these bills ensure that we will have better processes through the child protection system and better evidence, efficiency, decision-making and litigation which will result in children throughout our communities being better cared for, protected, safer and in a position to be the best that they can be. That is where we need each and every child to be so that they can be future leaders of tomorrow. I commend the bills to the House.