




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 16 August 2016

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Child Protection

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (10.27 am): Eighteen months. That is all it has taken for this Labor government to run Queensland's child safety system into the ground. Eighteen months is the time taken for abuse investigation backlogs to blow out. Some 343 suspected abuse cases were not actioned within the required 24 hours. That is a 22 per cent increase in just three months. Ten per cent of children whose cases should have been commenced in 24 hours remain at risk right now. Seventy-one per cent of all children whose cases should have been seen in five days are not being seen in that time, according to the most recent March data. These sorts of figures have not been seen since before the Carmody inquiry and subsequent reform agendas began. Eighteen months is the time taken for investigation completions to blow out, with almost 50 per cent now taking more than the allowed two months to complete. Eighteen months and now we have more than 9,000 children in out-of-home care.

It pains me to have to raise these statistics but, as I do, we should remember that behind every number there is a child at risk of abuse or a family in crisis right now. Not since 2011 have we seen the number of investigations not started sitting unallocated—a clear sign of a government trying to cook the books on response time blowouts. That is 3,200 suspect cases of abuse sitting with no evidence either way that they have been commenced in required times, when all the while the minister sits on their release for four months. Four months to release data that is entered in a real-time basis every day by child safety officers is simply unacceptable given recent events and given we are not just talking about figures; these are children in danger.

Between 2013 and 2015 the LNP began to turn the child safety system around, response times were improving and things were on the mend. The system was far from perfect, but we were working on it and we were getting results. Sadly, in just 18 months this asleep-at-the-wheel Labor government has let the situation go from on the mend to stretched to the limit. We have a minister who refuses to accept responsibility for the protection of children and a government that is more concerned with reviewing than actually doing. Not since the dark days of the Beattie-Bligh era have we seen the child safety system in such dire straits. The reality is that it has taken the death of toddler Mason Jet Lee to shine a light on the rapid meltdown in Child Safety under Labor's watch. It is time for this Labor government to stop hiding behind reviews and come clean on how the system failed this little boy to ensure it does not happen again. It has now been six weeks since the latest full quarter for Child Safety reporting and a close to the financial year. The minister needs to come clean on the true number of investigations not commenced in the last year. This government needs to claim responsibility.

(Time expired)