




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

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PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Child Protection

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (2.53 pm): As I rise in this House today, I do so knowing that as of this morning more than 28,000 people have signed a petition calling for stronger laws to ensure children presenting at hospitals or at doctor's rooms with suspected abuse are not released until a full investigation has been completed. I want to say thank you to Alicia Duvall, who started this petition and who has been working tirelessly to effect positive change coming out of the recent tragic death of Mason Jet Lee. It disappoints me that the embattled Minister for Child Safety could so flippantly dismiss the voices of more than 28,000 people, but what is most concerning is the way the minister did it which shows she has no idea how the child safety system works.

In Queensland for an investigation into abuse to have commenced, Child Safety staff must first sight the child involved in the allegation. They must then make an assessment of whether harm has occurred. Once this has occurred, Child Safety may refer the matter to a suspected child abuse and neglect team, a SCAN team, which is a multiagency team that makes assessments of the ongoing care needs of a child who has been harmed or is suspected of being harmed. Why I raise this is because this minister claims that the SCAN teams are there to stop children leaving hospitals who present with signs of abuse or non-accidental injury. The minister's statement in *Quest News* on 17 August is wrong and she would do well to read her department's own child safety practice manual before she makes up stories to avoid scrutiny over past system failures. Even the health department's own education tool around reporting abuse and harm of a child who presents states SCAN teams only 'may' happen as a follow-up once a mandatory report is made. Where was the SCAN team for Mason Lee? Where was the SCAN team when he was discharged from hospital four months before his death? The minister needs to apologise to the thousands of people who have already voiced their concerns at the failings in the current system and correct the record.

Furthermore, we still have not had the minister categorically rule out whether her department is downgrading abuse notifications or if they have done so in the past 12 months. We know that five children have been murdered in the past 12 months and a further 16 deaths are being investigated due to suspicious circumstances. We know that a recent Galaxy survey found 80 per cent of Queenslanders believe the child protection system was under pressure or in crisis. The LNP have called for an independent coronial inquiry which would help restore public confidence in our child protection system. The people of Queensland are demanding answers from this minister and Labor over its failed handling of the child safety system. Twenty-eight thousand people cannot be wrong and this minister better start listening.