



Speech By  
**Ros Bates**


**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2016

**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Minister for Child Safety**

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (11.54 am): For months, Queenslanders have watched in disbelief as the embattled, incompetent Minister for Child Safety has bumbled and fumbled from one crisis to the next as she desperately clings to her portfolio. They have watched as she ignored the pleas of her department, who were crying out for extra resources to protect our kids. They have watched as the minister responsible for the protection of Queensland children has demonstrated time and time again that she is completely out of her depth and not up to the task. The result of this is that more than 60 per cent of Queenslanders have no confidence in this minister's ability to manage the child protection system. Queenslanders can see that this minister is a phoney, they can see that this minister is a fraud and they can see that this crisis began under her watch. They can see that she has no plan to fix it and they can see that she has to go.

This is a minister who ignored all the warning signs of backlogs in her department and refused to take action until she was dragged kicking and screaming by the opposition and by the media. There can be no doubt that the minister was warned time and time again that her department was at crisis point. There can be no doubt that time and time again she ignored all the warning signs. She was warned by the child death review annual report of 2014-15. She was warned by her department, who briefed her last October—a year ago this month. She was warned by December 2016 data which showed the slide was continuing on her watch. She was warned by the ROGS data in January 2016. She was warned by the March performance data this year, which again showed a slide back to the bad old days before the Carmody reforms. What did this minister do? Absolutely nothing.

Now we have a system which under this minister's watch has gone from improving over time to sharp decline. After the terrible deaths of children who were known to Child Safety, we have it confirmed that this minister simply shut down a record number of suspected child abuse cases with no action or no outcome recorded. We have 1,124 cases closed without follow-up, without any attention, whilst children waited for Child Safety to come knocking on their door. We have a record number of cases taking longer than the required 60 days to finalise—more than 7,692 cases taking longer than they should. We have more than 3,254 cases languishing on waiting lists with no case worker assigned. We have 343 urgent cases of suspected abuse not actioned within the 24-hour response time. That is 10 per cent of all urgent cases which need to be actioned today, right now, sitting on a desk and nothing being done. We have 71 per cent of cases requiring a five-day response not actioned in time. We have 78 per cent of cases requiring a 10-day response not actioned in time. We have more children in need of foster care than foster carers able to look after them.

Where is the Minister for Child Safety as this crisis continues to unfold? She is constantly making excuses, ordering reviews or rehashing and rebadging glossy announcements. She refuses to reveal the true picture of caseloads for child safety service centres. She is refusing to detail the regions at

greatest risk. She is painting over the reality that only 21 new child safety officers have been hired in 2015-16 and only 17 promised in the 2016-17 budget. She is promising 40 additional staff who will not spend a single day on the front line out in the community protecting our kids. She is refusing to lift the freeze on backfilling front-line child safety officer positions which continues to see more positions left unfilled. She is fudging the figures and making hollow promises. She is desperately trying to hold onto her position to the detriment of our children.

Queenslanders are not blind. They are watching. They are watching as more cases emerge with no-one to address them. They are watching as more kids lie waiting with no-one coming to help them. They are watching as this minister plays catch-up with children's lives. Behind every one of these numbers is a Queensland child who someone thought was in danger but who may never be rescued by this broken system under this failing minister. Queenslanders have no confidence in this minister to do her job, they have no confidence in her ability to protect our most vulnerable children and they have no confidence in her ability to turn it around. Our state deserves better. Our kids deserve better. This minister has to go.