




Speech By
Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Record of Proceedings, 3 November 2016

MOTION: PALASZCZUK LABOR GOVERNMENT, PERFORMANCE

 **Ms BATES** (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (6.10 pm): I rise to support the motion moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. We do not have to look much further for a complete failure than the Minister for Child Safety, but what we thought was a tragic failure in Child Safety has now spread to the critical portfolio of Domestic and Family Violence. At a time when we see the government spending more than \$1 million on motels for victims of domestic violence, we have evidence that this government is discouraging DVConnect from using the network of private crisis shelters and yet at the same time across Queensland we hear more and more stories of victims being turned away from government funded shelters because they are at capacity. I have spoken with private shelters from Far North Queensland down to the Gold Coast and they all confirm the referrals have stopped despite more and more victims being pushed into unsafe motels. What makes this situation worse is that, on the minister's own admission, in the last 12 months there were at least three incidents at motels where victims had been placed that required police to attend. How long will it be before someone is killed because of this government's hopeless management of domestic violence crisis support? We have a crisis in this state when it comes to domestic violence. Under this government, breaches of protection orders that are designed to protect victims have jumped almost 40 per cent to more than 22,000 in just one year. These so-called protection orders mean nothing if they do not protect the victim, and this government and this minister continue to ignore this serious issue.

The complete failure of this minister to manage her portfolio does not end there. We know that under this minister's watch the performance of Child Safety has slipped to levels of the previous Beattie-Bligh era that gave rise to the Carmody inquiry. The latest Child Safety quarterly data showed that 65 per cent of the 13,279 Queensland children suspected of abuse are not being seen within the recommended time. These figures were the worst since the bad old days of the Bligh Labor government and, like the train disaster which continues to unfold, the buck stops with this minister. The minister has tried to spin the figures every which way, but the fact remains that too many vulnerable Queensland children are being left in danger for far too long, and that is just not good enough.

Under this embattled Labor minister 79 per cent of suspected abuse cases requiring action within 10 days are not being seen. This minister knew at least two weeks before its release that the data was going to be bad but chose to release it in the middle of the Queensland Rail crisis and under cover of a tragedy at Dreamworld. Labor has had 20 months to ensure the child safety system is doing its job. Instead, it is going backwards in every regard. We know for a fact that in places like Caboolture case loads for Child Safety sit at more than 60 as recently as June/July 2016. In a recent visit to Roma it was revealed to me they were carrying a case load of more than 30. If this minister claims that the average case load is 19, why is she refusing to provide a breakdown of case loads by Child Safety service centre? She is either deliberately hiding the truth on front-line centre case loads or she does not want to know.

Under this minister Queenslanders are asking: are our children really protected when the department is closing more files than ever before, with no investigation or assessment outcome? In the June data this had hit a high of more than 1,400. This is a 20 per cent jump on the year to date ending data in March. How could a department with cross-relationships with police, Health and federal agencies like Centrelink and Medicare not be able to locate or find families? These are files with enough evidence to have a regional intake service to classify the case to the notification threshold, but they were closed with no outcome. This now means that more than 1,400 children at risk of abuse waiting for Child Safety to come knocking were never, ever seen.

Just when we thought the minister's failure had stopped, it just keeps going. We then had the minister grandstanding on the issue of increasing the number of women on boards in a shameless attempt to distract from her own performance. Where was the Minister for Women when it was a female CEO who fell on her sword for the failure of the embattled Minister for Transport? Is this the sort of women's policy we can expect from this government going forward—'Get involved but just know we will throw you under the bus or the train to protect incompetent ministers'? I say shame, Minister, shame! Whilst I would love to detail more and more failures of this minister, I am conscious of time. I support the motion before the House.

(Time expired)