




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 25 February 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Family and Child Connect

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.10 am): This government is committed to promoting the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland children and we know that the best way to keep children safe is to support their families to care for them. Parenting can be stressful and challenging, but some parents face additional challenges like maintaining stable accommodation, coping with poor mental health, struggling with drug or alcohol addiction or living in a home marked by domestic and family violence. We are committed to seeing that these families have access to the services they need when they need them to get help with these problems so that their children can safely stay in their care.

Earlier this month tenders closed for the final rollout of the Family and Child Connect services in North and Far North Queensland. This funding will help non-government organisations to set up new services that will support vulnerable families and their children in the Mackay and Whitsunday region, Cairns, Cape York and Torres Strait. When I was up in Cairns and Cooktown just a couple of weeks ago I spoke with a number of community members who told me how important it was for families to be offered parenting support. Family and Child Connect, and other local service providers, work with families to help them stay together and thrive. Families can contact Family and Child Connect for support and professionals or members of the public who are concerned about a child or a family's wellbeing can refer them directly to the service.

The Family and Child Connect services will be complemented by Intensive Family Support services to work with families who have multiple and complex problems that are impacting on their children's safety and wellbeing. These services also demonstrate the government's commitment to addressing the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. The Queensland government allocated new funding of \$4.49 million a year for six new Family and Child Connect services in Cairns and surrounds, Cape York and Torres Strait, Brisbane, Mackay, Mount Isa and the gulf in this year's budget. A further \$3.8 million a year recurrent funding was also allocated towards new Intensive Family Support services in Cairns, Brisbane, Mackay, Mount Isa and the gulf. By the end of this year Family and Child Connect services will be set up right across Queensland and nearly 35,000 vulnerable families will benefit from this service. It also helps boost local employment opportunities, creating 650 jobs with around 30 new jobs recently announced in Cairns and Mackay.