




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2016

CHILD PROTECTION REFORM AMENDMENT BILL; DIRECTOR OF CHILD PROTECTION LITIGATION BILL

 **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) (5.46 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions to today's debate of the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2016 and the Director of Child Protection Litigation Bill 2016. Thanks must also be extended to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills for her leadership in the initial introduction of the Director of Child Protection Litigation Bill and for her support during the passage of both bills. The Director of Child Protection Litigation Bill 2016 implements recommendation 13.17 of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry to establish the independent statutory agency of the Director of Child Protection Litigation. The Director of Child Protection Litigation Bill provides for the appointment of the director, a new independent statutory officer who is appointed by the Governor in Council and will report directly to the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Overall, the establishment of the director by the bill will provide greater accountability and oversight for child protection order applications filed in the Childrens Court and ensure that applications are supported by good quality evidence which means improved outcomes for children and families.

I will now turn my attention to the Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill 2016. The Child Protection Reform Amendment Bill implements 10 specific court related recommendations made by the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry and one recommendation made by the Court Case Management Committee. This bill has been developed through targeted consultation with key child protection and legal stakeholders and I am confident it will improve court processes and, most importantly, outcomes for children and families involved in child protection proceedings. Overall, these amendments in the bill strengthen the options for a child to take part in legal proceedings that affect their life. I note many of the issues raised tonight have been covered in the government's response. I note the members for Mudgeeraba, Mansfield and Aspley placed on record their concerns in relation to cost and the statewide operation of the Director of Child Protection Litigation. The director's budget is fully costed and will be closely monitored throughout implementation, and this includes, as I outlined in my second reading speech, the adoption of a Brisbane based model.

These two bills will ensure that the voices of children and their families are heard to allow them to contribute to decisions that affect them, minimise delays in the Childrens Court and improve the quality of information and evidence before the court that makes such important decisions. I acknowledge the bipartisan support for these important court work reforms that have been reflected in the committee's recommendation that the bills be passed.

I would like to particularly acknowledge the contribution of the member for Mudgeeraba to the debate. Her sharing of her personal journey took courage and bravery and I thank her for that. That courage is shared by many members in this House. I also thank the chair of the committee, the member for Nudgee, for her leadership during the committee's consideration of the bills and her contribution tonight. I know that she is a passionate and tireless advocate for child safety.

My department and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General are working hard to implement the recommendations of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry report to improve the wider child protection and family support system in Queensland. I thank the many staff from my department and staff from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General who have worked long hours to draft these important reforms. We are committed to working with and providing meaningful support to families when they need it to help them in their important role of keeping children safe.

Lastly, I would like to thank the six organisations and one individual who made submissions to the committee to assist during its consideration of the bills: the Queensland Alliance for Kids, Protect All Children Today, the Queensland Family and Child Commission, the Queensland Law Society, the Together union, the Bar Association of Queensland and Mr Ryan Haddrick. The time taken to make their submissions is truly appreciated. I commend the bills to the House.