



Speech By  
**Hon. Shannon Fentiman**


**MEMBER FOR WATERFORD**

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Record of Proceedings, 11 October 2016

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Child Protection**

 **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) (10.11 am): On Saturday I visited the Boondall home of long-time foster carer Kerrie Gorman to announce that the Palaszczuk government will hire an additional 82 permanent front-line child safety workers. These new workers, who will be in place by March, will bring down caseloads in Queensland and help to keep our children safe. They are over and above the 166 additional front-line staff in the department since two years ago and will be on top of the 47 extra staff announced in this year's budget.

These additional workers bring our 2016-17 investment to a total of 129 new child safety staff. This new investment means 48 front-line child safety officers, 20 front-line child safety support officers, seven front-line senior team leaders and seven front-line support administrative officers for Queensland. We are restoring front-line and front-line support roles after the LNP's fiscal repair cut 225 workers from the child safety department.

Our child safety staff are dedicated and hardworking Queenslanders. The work they are doing is increasingly complex. Staff are spending more time working with families and it is taking longer to get results. It is only reasonable in the wake of tragedies like the death of Tiahleigh Palmer that Queenslanders have concerns about our child safety system. The reality is that our child safety system has been under pressure for many years. As the Minister for Child Safety, I take responsibility for restoring Queenslanders' confidence in the child safety system. I am responsible for making sure that the system has the resources and the hardworking staff it needs to keep our children safe.

Queenslanders can be confident that these additional front-line workers will help us provide more timely responses to at-risk children and provide more support and casework for children in out-of-home care. We currently have ads on Seek and are conducting a nation-wide search to recruit new staff to come to work for our dynamic department. I am confident that we have the existing partnerships with TAFEs and universities to attract workers to work here in Queensland.

Just last week in Toowoomba at the child safety service centre I met a young social work undergraduate who was working at the centre who was very keen to commence work with the department. I know we will attract the brightest students and they will make a huge difference in supporting some of our most vulnerable families and children. These new workers are a game changer for Child Safety. Caseloads will immediately be reduced to 17 on average across the state, which is the lowest they have ever been in Queensland's history. In addition to our early intervention family support programs and record investment, we will see real outcomes for vulnerable children and families right across Queensland.