




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2016

MOTION

Child Protection

 **Ms DAVIS** (Aspley—LNP) (6.11 pm): I rise to second the motion of no confidence in the Minister for Child Safety. Today is the day for the Premier to prove to Queenslanders that she takes the protection of our most vulnerable children as seriously as she should. It is time for this Premier to step up and step in and fix the mess that her minister has made of the child safety department in Queensland.

The LNP set the foundation for major child safety reform. A suite of 121 changes were made to the system that would bring Queensland's child protection into a contemporary framework, and we backed that up with a \$406 million investment. This framework was designed to ensure that at-risk children and families receive the services and supports they need before they reach crisis point. It is appalling that the child safety department is under siege because this incompetent minister has dropped the ball.

The public's confidence in Child Safety is eroding fast, and now we see staff being hung out to dry. I note with a level of scepticism the minister's comments that the recent report into the department's involvement with Mason Jet Lee found no systemic errors whatsoever; rather, she said it pointed the finger at all staff who had any involvement in this case. As we have seen, four staff members have been stood down and others are facing an ethical standards investigation.

The Premier must come clean, for she knows that it was well before Mason's case came to the attention of the department that the crisis with response time frames was unfolding. What an appalling situation we have here: in what should be an era of major advances in protecting children in this state, we now only see declining data. Worse still, the minister and Premier know the truth, and that is that right now thousands of highly vulnerable children are sitting in potentially abusive homes across the state waiting for Child Safety to come calling. There are major systemic issues occurring in this department. How do we know this? An RTI told us so, and I table a copy of this document which I obtained earlier this year.

Tabled paper: Document titled 'RTI Release' relating to child protection services data [\[2193\]](#).

These documents specifically pinpoint the struggling north coast region which the Caboolture Child Safety Service Centre forms part of. It highlights that there has been no drop in the volume of intakes and reports of harm being received. It would appear that the struggling region was left to its own devices to sort out the workload crisis.

When we are faced with the sheer incompetence of the child safety minister, Queenslanders should rightly expect that their Premier steps in and, at the very least, avails herself of all available information to make an informed judgement about how a statutory department is travelling. The Premier says there are no provisions in the Child Protection Act that enable her to read that report. Well, there are no provisions in the act that prevent it either.

The Premier would be well served to know that the original intent of the confidentiality provisions in the act were designed to protect children from being stigmatised as a child known to the department. This means protecting the identity of a child and any other information that can identify the child so that he or she is not marked out as an abused or neglected child. The intent was not to prevent the release of information to a Premier when such information relates to the performance of a person's function under or in relation to the act; nor do the confidentiality provisions prevent access to a document when the purpose of that access relates directly to the protection or wellbeing of children.

This internal child death review report is all about Mason's protection and wellbeing and, if read, I am sure it would highlight the risks being carried by the child safety department in view of the appalling response time frame crisis that is occurring. It appears that ignorance is bliss. If read by the Premier, this report would signal to her that there are serious and imminent risks to the safety and health of vulnerable children like Mason who are being let down by the very department that is meant to protect them. If the Premier will not do the right thing as the leader of this state and read this report, then at the very least she owes it to every Queenslanders to table the advice that she has received which says that she is prevented from doing so.

As we finish parliament for this year and head into the festive season, I can assure you that all on this side of the House will be waiting in hope that the Premier steps up and steps in to ensure that no child reported to Child Safety is left in an abusive home over the Christmas break waiting for someone with authority to come calling to see if they are safe. It is not Santa that these children will need: they need a competent minister leading the \$1 billion a year statutory department that should be there to protect them. Sadly, what they have is an incompetent Minister Fentiman.