




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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ADJOURNMENT

Foster and Kinship Carers

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (6.27 pm): Last week I met an inspiring woman from my electorate by the name of Penny, who has opened her home and her heart to three boys who were homeless and in the child protection system. Penny, who has three children of her own, took these boys in, got them back into school, helped them find a school based traineeship, and got them back to playing footy and living happy and healthy lives. I sat in awe of Penny, a single mum and a very busy small business owner, who told me her story of helping these three boys who were desperate for a stable and safe home life—something they had never had before.

People like Penny and many foster and kinship carers in Keppel dedicate their time and energy to provide a safe, loving and stable home for about 1,400 local children in foster care. Local foster and kinship carers need to be commended for opening their homes and hearts to children in need. There are currently more than 5,300 carer families in Queensland—630 foster and kinship carers in Central Queensland—who find room in their hearts and homes for more than 8,800 children and young people in care. This group of individuals and families is the backbone of our child protection system. Without their help, some of the state's most vulnerable children would have no-one to turn to. Often it is a thankless job, but I maintain that our state's foster carers ought to be congratulated and celebrated by the community.

I also want to pay special tribute to the many local Child Safety staff who also do an amazing job in keeping our local children safe. Last week I also met with Nikki Joyce from the Act for Mason campaign. We spoke for nearly two hours about child safety and how we might be able to work together to improve the lives of young people in our community. Nikki and I agree wholeheartedly that protecting children is the responsibility of all of us and we all have a role to play in keeping children safe. I will be attending the Walk for Mason Rockhampton event which will be held on Sunday, 4 June to show my support for the community working together to keep our children safe.

The Palaszczuk government has invested a record amount, more than \$1 billion, to keeping Queensland children safe in 2016-17. Almost \$200 million has been invested in domestic and family violence services which will also help keep children at risk safe. We have 166 more front-line Child Safety and Child Safety support staff than we did two years ago. I am proud that the Palaszczuk government is leading the way by restoring services and investing in jobs that support vulnerable Queenslanders, but the government cannot do this alone. We need the whole community to keep Queensland children safe, whether they be in care or supported by their parents, and we must continue to deliver Queensland families in crisis the helping hand that they need to stay together safely.