




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Child Safety

 **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) (10.06 am): On Saturday I was very pleased to join with representatives of Peak Care, Create, child safety officers and other dedicated child protection advocates as we announced that over the next four years the Palaszczuk government would make a lifesaving \$200 million investment to hire almost 300 new child safety staff. Our child safety staff are some of the hardest working public servants in the state, toiling tirelessly to protect Queensland's most vulnerable children. Those incredible lifesaving workers deserve every possible support to do their jobs and that is exactly what the Palaszczuk government is doing.

Of the 292 additional child safety staff to be hired, more than 230 will commence work in the coming financial year. That comes on top of 129 new staff already on the ground this year. That is a staggering 421 new child safety staff over three years, representing the biggest investment in front-line staff in well over a decade. Ninety-five per cent of those staff are front line and front-line support and many of them will be employed in the communities where the drug ice is inflicting the most damage.

Even more importantly, we are making sure that the right people are in the right place with the creation of 50 new senior child safety officer positions, building career pathways for experienced workers to stay on the front line working directly with families. That investment will see 140 new child safety officers, 48 new child safety support officers, 22 new child safety senior team leaders and 16 new front-line child safety practice experts. This record staff budget will supercharge our efforts to bring down caseloads, improve practice and support children, families and carers.

Increased levels of violence reported in homes and increasing levels of drug use, in particular ice, take a terrible toll on families. In the past year, one-third of all children coming into child protection had a parent using the drug ice. That is why we have also committed \$7.4 million over three years to help families that are struggling with ice addiction.

Professor Karen Healy, National President of the Australian Association of Social Workers, put it best when she said, 'This plan will save lives and provide better outcomes for families.' When we shared this announcement with staff we spoke to Jo, a child protection practitioner with 35 years experience, who said, 'We have been heard and we are so excited. We are going to have new child safety support officers and additional administration officers to support those people to get the work done and get it done more quickly.' I am really looking forward to continuing our work with our front-line staff as we roll out these new positions, and I look forward to keeping the House updated not just on the recruitment throughout the next few months but also on the positive outcomes that this life-changing investment will achieve.