




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 15 June 2017

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

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) (10.00 am): The Palaszczuk government is building a stronger child protection system to help our most vulnerable Queenslanders. We have delivered the biggest investment in front-line staff in well over a decade with almost 300 extra staff on top of the 129 already on the ground this year, and I am pleased to say that 236 new front-line and front-line support staff will start this coming year. Professor Karen Healy, national President of the Australian Association of Social Workers and a former child safety officer, said that this plan will save lives and provide better outcomes for families.

The Palaszczuk government will continue to put the interests of at-risk children first and do everything possible to help tackle the scourge of ice addiction and its devastating impacts on families. This is an incredibly complex area. The families that we are working with are experiencing multiple issues, including increased levels of domestic and family violence in the home and, worryingly, growing ice usage. The Palaszczuk government is showing leadership on this issue. We are the first government to recognise the impact ice is having on vulnerable families we work with because we are the first government to measure how and where ice is leaving children vulnerable and at risk. The recent research showed us that one in three children subject to a Child Safety investigation has a parent using ice and these families were concentrated in ice corridors across the state. For the first time we have introduced tough new policies with mandatory drug testing as well as new training for our front-line staff.

Since our policy began, 853 drug tests have been undertaken by parents working with us to ensure that our child safety officers, who I think have the toughest job in this state, have the right information to make a decision about whether a child is at risk. We are reporting on this publicly and we are bringing the issue out into the open, and that is why I am so proud to be a member of the Palaszczuk government that has responded this week with an \$18 million ice package, including \$7.4 million to directly target families affected by ice who are involved with the child safety department. I am committed to ensuring that our extra staff will be focused on reinforcing our front-line workers who work with families in these ice corridors and I will keep the House updated about where these new workers will be placed in ice corridors across the state.