




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (3.18 pm): I rise to speak on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's report No. 16 of the 56th Parliament into its oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I am a member of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee, which oversees administering the QFCC. I note that a number of speakers have focused on the details of and expressed various political points of view about the commission. For the benefit of my constituents who might be watching, I would like to give a bit of an overview of what the Family and Child Commission does.

The QFCC's role is: oversight of the child protection system; promotion and advocacy regarding the responsibilities of families to protect and care for, and the safety and wellbeing of, children and young people, particularly those in the child protection or youth justice system; to provide research, assistance, capacity building and leadership for agencies involved in the child protection system in Queensland; to review, analyse and evaluate systemic policies and practices relevant to the child protection system; to inform and educate the community; and to report to the minister about matters relating to its functions.

The act under which it operates, the Family and Child Commission Act 2014, sets out ways in which the commissioners are to perform their functions, such as: engaging with, and taking into consideration, the views of children, young people and their families; ensuring the interests of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders are adequately and appropriately represented; respecting and promoting the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to protect and care for their children and young people; being sensitive to the ethnic or cultural identity and values of children, young people and their families; consulting with relevant agencies and advocacy entities; and working cooperatively with relevant agencies and helping build their capacity to meet the needs of children, young people and their families.

I acknowledge the staff of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, some of whom have been good enough to appear before the committee and provide briefings to us. They include the CEO and Principal Commissioner, Cheryl Vardon, and commissioners Phillip Brooks, Cheryl Leavy, Leanne Gill and Natalie Conner.

I am proud to say that it was an LNP government that established the Queensland Family and Child Commission. We are all aware that the Carmody inquiry was established by the government in 2012 to look into child protection in Queensland. There was a lot of low-hanging fruit, I think. We saw that the system was looking after the system particularly well and it was quite involved, but for one reason or another it was failing the people on the ground and the clients.

The Carmody inquiry came up with a number of recommendations around the establishment of a body like the QFCC. Its recommendations were that that body would need to: monitor, review and report on the performance of the child protection system in line with the National Framework for

Protecting Australia's Children 2009-20; provide cross-sectoral leadership and advice for the protection and care of children and young people to drive achievement of the child protection system; provide an authoritative view and advice on current research and child protection practice to support the delivery of services and the performance of Queensland's child protection system; and build the capacity of the non-government sector and the child protection workforce. I think that that is what the QFCC has been doing.

We heard at the time of the budget this year that the QFCC has suffered funding cuts under the current government. We would like to see that reversed of course. I also wanted to make some observations on the matter of blue cards, but I will not be doing so in observance of the standing orders given there is a bill before the House on that matter.

I commend the work of the QFCC. I think they have a very important job to do. They have come a long way and have done a lot of good work since their inception. I commend this report to the House.