




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 18 October 2018

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.55 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report No. 16 titled *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission* tabled on 31 July 2018.

I rise to speak to report No. 16. The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight of the responsibilities for the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Report No. 16 by the committee provides information regarding the performance by the Queensland Family and Child Commission of its functions under the Family and Child Commission Act 2014.

The committee met with Ms Cheryl Vardon, the Principal Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, and Mr Phillip Brooks, Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission, on 11 June 2018. The committee also reviewed the Queensland Family and Child Commission's annual report, which was tabled on 29 September 2017.

As I stated in my foreword in report No. 16, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the Queensland Family and Child Commission who assisted the committee throughout the course of its oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission for the 2016-17 financial year. A special thanks goes to the Queensland Parliamentary Service staff, Principal Commissioner Cheryl Vardon and Commissioner Phillip Brooks.

The committee makes one recommendation in the report: that the House note the contents of the report. The Queensland Family and Child Commission is established under the Family and Child Commission Act 2014 to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and improve the child protection system. Schedule 6 of the standing orders provides that the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee has oversight responsibility for the Queensland Family and Child Commission including to monitor and review the Queensland Family and Child Commission functions and report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter that the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly's attention.

The Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee tabled report No. 16, *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission*, in the 56th Parliament on 31 July 2018. The report focused on the 2016-17 financial year and notes the work that the Queensland Family and Child Commission has achieved, especially given the extremely challenging issues it examined. The committee congratulates the Queensland Family and Child Commission on its performance and recognises the enormous body of work generated in the context of the Queensland Family and Child Commission's focus on the safety, wellbeing and best interests of all children and young people in Queensland.

During the hearing, the principal commissioner told the committee that the Queensland Family and Child Commission promotes the safety, wellbeing and best interests of all children and young people in Queensland. The principal commissioner pointed out in the hearing that this is quite a significant undertaking. The principal commissioner went on to say that the commission focuses on the vulnerable as a priority and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children but stressed that the commission's remit is for all children.

The principal commissioner pointed out that there are something like over one million children and young people in Queensland aged between zero and 18 years and that this is a figure they hold in their heads daily. The principal commissioner went on to say that it is a privilege and a responsibility, and that they go about their business by identifying and advocating for improvements to the child and family support system. The principal commissioner said that the Queensland Family and Child Commission is quite unique in that over recent years since the machinery-of-government changes in 2014 the commission has been building a contemporary, sustainable children's commission for Queensland—one that does its very best. I commend the report to the House.