




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 17 October 2019

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.47 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee report titled No. 42 *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission* tabled on 4 July 2019.

I rise to speak about the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee's oversight report on the performance of the Queensland Family and Child Commission and the committee's examination of the commission's annual report for 2017-18. The committee met publicly with senior officers of the Queensland Family and Child Commission on 25 February 2019. The hearing transcript is available on the committee's web page. At the meeting the committee considered staffing challenges faced by the QFCC and the QFCC's progress on implementing recommendations from the Anti-Cyberbullying Task Force. The committee also looked at the QFCC's progress in implementing recommendations from the blue card system report and an update on the implementation of the Our Way strategy.

The committee's oversight report examines the QFCC's annual report, child protection reforms and systems reviews aimed at promoting and advocating for the safety, wellbeing and best interests of all children. Appearing at the public hearing that was held on 25 February were Phillip Brooks, Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission; Ms Tracy Fogarty, Director, Office of the Commissioners, Queensland Family and Child Commission; and Ms Cheryl Vardon, Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission. Ms Vardon, in her opening statement to the committee, noted that the commission is responsible for providing oversight of the child protection system, working with services and the sector to improve systems as much as they can to keep Queensland kids happy, safe and well.

In her opening statement Ms Vardon also noted that in Queensland there are 1.2 million children aged between zero and 18 years, and that that is a significant number of children. Ms Vardon went on to tell the committee that the commission does its work through connecting, reviewing and influencing, and that influencing is a key part of what the commission does. Ms Vardon said that the commission is proud of their real collaboration with other stakeholders, children, families, communities, the non-government sector and government departments. The commission recommends solutions for some of the most sensitive, critical and complex issues that one can imagine to do with children and young people and their families—issues in which no single department can assist alone.

One of the commission's areas of focus is raising awareness about what young people need as advised by the children themselves. The commissioner advised the committee about the commission's focus on monitoring, reviewing, evaluating and reporting on the child protection and family support system progress on reforms; and promoting the prevention of child deaths. That evaluation runs alongside a research agenda with up-to-date information and advice. At the hearing, the commissioner also advised the committee that they work with partners to strengthen capability, capacity and culture and, importantly, that they educate parents, families, communities and professionals on keeping young children safe.

The commissioner referred to work the Office of the Queensland Family and Child Commission has undertaken. She asked the committee to acknowledge that piece of work and I do so in my presentation today on report No. 42. The work is called the Growing up in Queensland project, otherwise known as *This place I call home*. In that piece of work, the commission gave a platform to more than 7,000 of the 1.2 million children and young people who call Queensland home. The work encouraged children to speak openly and honestly about their communities, their hopes and dreams and how they would like government and decision-makers to support their needs now and into the future. The work provided very significant statistical information in terms of policies around children and young people having their say. What the commission heard provides evidence to government and from government to industry on priorities such as giving all children a great start. On behalf of the committee, I thank the commissioner and the staff of the QFCC.