




Speech By
Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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ADJOURNMENT

Child Protection

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (7.12 pm): It was only last week that the mother of Mason Jett Lee was sentenced to nine years in jail after pleading guilty to child cruelty and manslaughter of Mason Jett Lee. I know that I do not need to detail the horrible circumstances around Mason's passing. It is a story that the whole of Queensland has watched unfold in horror since 2016.

No child should suffer the way that Mason suffered, and no person should ever get off lightly for being a part of such suffering. That is why the LNP has introduced the Mason Jett Lee laws, to ensure that child killers will spend at least 15 years behind bars, rather than the current average of less than seven. No child should have to suffer in the first place. When the government fails children, it should be held accountable.

A year ago the Premier refused to release the Child Death Case Review Panel's report on Mason's death. This was reportedly done after the Director of Public Prosecutions advised that releasing the recommendations could prejudice a trial. This secret report remains closed to the public still. The excuses to keep Mason's report secret are running out. The report should be revealed. We know that the failures of this government to protect Queensland's most vulnerable are starting to rise.

The secrecy around the panel's report is just one symptom of a larger crisis in Child Safety under this government. The fact that the last release of Child Safety statistics were done in the twilight days before Christmas last year is truly telling of how this government tries to hide their failures, and the statistics are really damning. According to the latest statistics on Child Safety, notifications of concern that a child needs protection were up to a new high of nearly 25,000. The number of children subject to a notification also skyrocketed to a new high of just over 21,500 in the year up to the September 2018 quarter. The number of children subject to a child concern report rose to just over 62,200, which is up from just over 60,000 in 2017-18. The number of children living away from home has reached a horrifying new peak of over 9,700, which is over 1,100 more than in 2013-14.

Disturbingly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up 53 per cent of the over 1,100 children who have been added to out-of-home care since June 2014. Equally disturbing is that the number of Indigenous children living away from home has jumped by 615 in just four years—a disturbing increase of 17.4 per cent. Not only is the department of child safety being crushed under the weight of Labor's incompetence, putting Queensland children at risk, but the gap on Indigenous disadvantage with Child Safety is also increasing under the Palaszczuk Labor government. It has never been clearer that more needs to be done to keep Queensland kids safe. I am calling on the Palaszczuk Labor government to release the secret report into Mason Jett Lee's tragic death. No more cover-ups or delays. The children of Queensland deserve better. The children of Queensland need better.