



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (3.11 pm): As we know, the Family and Child Commission was established in July 2014 to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and to improve child protection services. In the 2016-17 annual report the principal commissioner noted several areas the commission had examined. For example, it increased its focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The report stated that the commission had done a great amount of work in breaking down barriers to employment and developing community based approaches. The commission also worked with its partners on initiatives aimed at helping and making changes for vulnerable children and families.

The commission's annual report also provided details of delays in the implementation of recommendations from the 2013 Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry that had not been delivered at the time of the committee report. The committee report indicates that systems reviews highlight disturbing facts around delays in implementation of actions to protect those most vulnerable. A report released in July 2016 following the death of Tiahleigh Palmer identified a number of inadequacies and made 29 recommendations. We all wait for the findings of the review now due. It is very important that we continue to look after those most vulnerable. Of the 17 recommendations of the supplementary review, tabled 18 months ago, only two had been completed at the time of the committee report, with the remainder yet to be finalised. There was some bad news in relation to the prepared report requested by the Premier following the death of Mason Jett Lee, tabled 19 months ago, with only one recommendation being considered.

The commission was asked over two years ago to lead an examination of the blue card and foster care systems in Queensland to identify any gaps and problems with meeting the safety needs of children. We know that at least a reference group was created. There is also some legislation before the House. Of the 42 recommendations, at the time of the committee report work had commenced on only half of the recommendations. Others were still being reflective or under legislative review.

It was disturbing to read in the annual report that the rate of substantiated child protection cases involving Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been declining since 2013, when other data and reports, like the Smallbone and Jones reports, paint a very different picture in Queensland. New figures show that the child safety system is continuing to suffer under pressures. A road map was developed for implementation of the Carmody reforms. I hope there will be a lot more action, considering that there have been 40 reports over the past 10 years. Children deserve us putting our best efforts into implementing those reforms.

I will provide some statistics. In 2017-18 child safety notifications reached their highest level in five years, at nearly 24,000, and response times in almost half of all cases were between five and 10-days. Statistics from Child Safety show that intakes are up around 120,000 since the Carmody reforms commenced. There are nearly 10,000 children living away from home, about a thousand more

than in 2013-14. The data also shows that the number of children subject to substantiated sexual harm in 2017-18 was 345—a jump of 70 from the year before. There are significant challenges in keeping vulnerable children in our society safe. Although others see things in a different light, I believe this committee report should sound alarms bells across the state. I look forward to working with the Family and Child Commission to ensure our kids get the help they need.

I challenge the government's claim that the child safety system has shown improvements when any data sends a different message. We are seeing more children subject to substantiated harm or risk of harm, more children living away from home and more children subject to sexual harm. No matter how we cherrypick the data to sell a story, the fact remains that we need to look after those kids. I encourage everyone to get on board in promoting child safety. It is everyone's responsibility. Everyone in the community has a role to play. Anyone can start by joining one of the many Walks for Daniel—they start tomorrow—and supporting the Daniel Morcombe Foundation. We need to keep the conversation going about how best to keep our kids safe. We look forward to continuing the reforms to ensure that those most vulnerable get the action and the support they need.