




Speech By
Hon. Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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CHILD DEATH REVIEW LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. MT RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services) (5.08 pm): I rise to support the Child Death Review Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. We must never forget that we are debating a piece of legislation that is about the welfare and safety of some of the most vulnerable members of our community—our children. Community safety is of paramount importance to our government, and that is why this legislation is being introduced.

On 10 April 2017, the Queensland government released the Queensland Family and Child Commission's report entitled *A systems review of individual agency findings following the death of a child*. The government accepted its single recommendation to 'consider a revised external and independent model for reviewing the deaths of children known to the child protection system'. To that end, the government will establish a new, external and independent Child Death Review Board. The board will replace existing child death case review panels within child safety. The board will consistently focus on all deaths of children known to the department who have died in the previous 12 months, with the ability to make whole-of-systems recommendations to government, non-government or private entities in a way that is timely and transparent. The Queensland government is committed to introducing legislation that requires key agencies, including Queensland Health, the Department of Education, the Queensland Police Service and the department of child safety, to undertake internal reviews in child death cases.

What I have just outlined is the essence of the changes the government will introduce. What matters also though is the motivation. What do we want? We want all children to be as safe as possible. The question is how we can best achieve that objective, that motivation. This government will always do everything in its power to keep the community safe and to keep vulnerable members of our community safe, especially our children. This goes without saying. Our government will always do everything in its power to protect our children, but it is also a community responsibility. The safety of children is everybody's business. It is a collective responsibility. It is a matter for families. It is a matter for communities. It is a matter for organisations. It is a matter for governments. Every child has the right to be brought up in a loving, supportive family environment but, when necessary, the government does need to step in to ensure the safety of children. In the event of a child's death, the government will ensure that all circumstances are fully investigated.

The independent review board will have the ability to look at a child's involvement across a range of systems and services that may be provided by government, non-government or private entities and in turn make recommendations. The board will also have supporting functions to analyse data and apply research to identify patterns, trends and risk factors. Beyond this, the board will also have the power to request confidential information from any entity, whether that is government, non-government or private. For example, the board could request confidential information from a public entity, a non-government agency that provides a service to children or families, a private hospital, a medical practitioner, the principal of a school or an early childhood education and care provider. Provisions in the bill maintain existing protections to ensure privacy and the confidentiality of information obtained.

An important difference from the current system is that the board will be able to make public system recommendations and publicly monitor the implementation of these recommendations. The bill provides that the board produce an annual report on its operations. In the interests of transparency, this report will be tabled annually in parliament. As I mentioned, the motivation behind this bill is a very noble one and that is to protect our children, to do everything in our power to keep our children safe, especially those in vulnerable circumstances.

I commend this bill to the House. I encourage all members to support it. I pay tribute to all of those hardworking people in our community—be they in government agencies, like the department of child safety or the Queensland Police Service, or in non-government organisations or in the community. They work hard every single day to ensure kids are kept safe. I pay tribute to them. Their work is hard but it is very honourable work. I keep them in my thoughts because I know their work is challenging. I commend the bill to the House and I encourage members to support it.