




Speech By
Rob Molhoek

MEMBER FOR SOUTHPORT

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CHILD DEATH REVIEW LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MOLHOEK** (Southport—LNP) (3.33 pm): I rise to speak in support of the legislation that is before the House. In particular, I wish to speak about child death reviews. It is with a degree of sadness that I rise to speak on this legislation, as for a very short period I had what can only be described as very personal contact and personal experiences with child death reviews. For the first 12 months of the Newman government I was appointed as the assistant minister for child safety. It was my great privilege to work with the then member for Aspley, Tracy Davis, who was the minister at that time. In that first 12 months one of the tasks that Tracy asked me to undertake was to read and provide executive summaries and a bit of guidance and advice on the many child death reviews presented to the minister's office by the department.

I can assure the House that those reviews are not exactly what you could call great bedtime reading. On a couple of occasions I made the mistake of taking some reports home to read. After a week or two of doing that I promised myself that I would never do it again but would make time available, first thing in the morning or during the day, when in the office of child safety and communities when it was in Charlotte Street.

It is incredibly sad that each year we lose so many Queensland children. I am not sure of the current figures, but I know that five or six years ago it was in the order of eight to 10 a week and that was for all sorts of reasons. Very sadly, we lost some children to accidents, some of which were avoidable. There were some farm accidents and some accidents within an urban environment. I remember one particular occasion when a family was travelling in the electorate of Lockyer. Unfortunately, one of the children opened the door of a small mobile van. The supervisor did not see what had happened. Tragically, one of the other children was killed in a very significant motor vehicle accident. That highlights why it is such an important piece of legislation that is before the House.

I am pleased to see the recommendation that the Queensland Family and Child Commission will undertake a more significant role in reviewing child deaths within Queensland, because that is not something that should be taken lightly. It is not a task that should be left to a few within the minister's office or within the department. It needs full scrutiny and robust review so that meaningful recommendations can be made to government about how to manage the many incidents that fall, sadly, within the realm of responsibility for the department of child safety.

Today I was a little sad when the member for Bulimba made some comments about the LNP's record in this regard. Since the early 1990s, there has never been a year when the government of the day—whichever side of the House was in office—did not significantly increase spending on child safety. I commend the member for Clayfield, who is in the House with us as I speak, because when the findings of the Carmody commission were handed down some of the recommendations required a significant increase in spending.

Mr Nicholls: It was \$460 million.

Mr MOLHOEK: I thank the member for Clayfield and I take that interjection, because I was struggling to remember the exact figure. A further \$460 million was committed by the then Newman government to follow through and undertake many of the recommendations of the Carmody commission. That was just the first stage.

When I was appointed to the role of assistant minister for child safety, one of the first things that I did was to ask the library to provide a research brief on the history of child safety legislation in this state. I got myself copies of the Forde inquiry and the subsequent CMC inquiry into child protection practices. I spent Easter of 2012 in a coffee shop reading those reports. I have to say that in this state we have come a long way from the 1950s and the 1960s when there was, in fact, no legislation to protect children. Sadly, back in those darker days some of the references to children, particularly children born outside of marriage or outside of a normal healthy relationship, implied that basically they got the treatment that they deserved. In state budgets of the day there was very little to support families and children.

I am pleased that those dark days are behind us. I am pleased that I can stand in this House and support this. While this is only one of many measures that have been undertaken, it is a significant and important measure that we are dealing with in the House today. We need to understand fully the circumstances of child deaths, particularly when those children have been handed into the care of the state government through child protection orders or other instruments.

I want to briefly speak to the Bravehearts submission. I know I talk about Bravehearts a lot, but this is my 15th year of involvement with the organisation and I am very proud of the work of Bravehearts. I note that the submission was prepared by Carol Ronken, who has been with Bravehearts for some 20 years as the director of research. We would not find a more passionate or more well-informed advocate in Queensland or Australia, for that matter, than Carol, nor would we find anyone as passionate as Hetty Johnston.

I am pleased to note that in their submission they acknowledge both the importance and complexities in reviewing circumstances in relation to the death of a child. Most importantly, Bravehearts noted that it fully supports the proposed amendments under the Child Death Review Legislation Amendment Bill 2019. They also went on to note the establishment of a new death review board which expands the requirement for an internal review in the event of the death or serious physical injury of a child known to Child Safety or to other relevant agencies.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): Under the provisions of the business program agreed to by the House and the time allocated for this stage of the bill having expired, the question is that the bill be now read a second time.