




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.12 am): There is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of our children and young people. Every child deserves to be loved, to be safe and to have hope for the future. Unfortunately, this is not every child's reality. Our staff are called to respond to the most challenging circumstances and they dedicate their professional lives to serving vulnerable children. It is a high calling, and I acknowledge their contribution and I acknowledge their service.

I am proud to be part of a government that recognises the child protection system will always require constant vigilance, transformation and investment. That is why we have recently announced 153 additional child safety worker positions to boost frontline services for our most vulnerable children and their families. This is part of a \$42 million package to respond to unprecedented demand due to the impacts of COVID and increasing use of methamphetamines including ice, mental health issues and domestic violence.

Since 2015 we have invested more than \$850 million in child and family services to support vulnerable families and have restored and increased child safety staff levels by 550, including 39 this financial year. This 153-staff increase is in addition to a record \$1.475 billion investment in the child protection system this financial year. We are also investing \$1.75 million for the professional development of frontline child safety staff.

Since being appointed as the minister four months ago, I have had the privilege of sitting down with dozens of child safety staff across the state, including child safety officers, and listening to their stories. They are the ones rocking the four-week old baby because he is the one who has no parent willing or able to look after him. They are the ones trying to find a bed for the night for a nine-year-old dealing with trauma and behavioural issues who does not have a parent willing or able to provide for him. They are the ones making sure the two young boys I sat with last week—roughly the same age as my own—are clean, doing their homework, have a safe roof over their heads and a warm meal on the table.

The 153 positions announced today will be made up of 105 child safety officers, 18 senior team leaders, 18 child safety support officers and more than a dozen administration officers. We know the work child safety staff are doing is taking longer and is more intensive because the issues families face are becoming more complex. This staff increase means every child safety officer can spend the time they need to create more meaningful relationships with children and families in need, getting them the help they need when they need it most.

COVID and the increasing abuse of methamphetamines and ice have created unprecedented demand on our child safety networks and more frontline staff means more intensive work with children and families sooner. The first of these new staff will be on the ground by the middle of this year.