



Speech By  
**Amanda Camm**


**MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY**

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Record of Proceedings, 17 March 2022

**LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

**Report, Motion to Take Note**

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (3.17 pm): It is a privilege to serve this parliament and the broader Queensland community as the opposition's shadow minister for child protection. In that role I get to travel the state to engage with those who provide services to our most vulnerable. Through those meetings and discussions I have met with commissioners Cheryl Vardon and Natalie Lewis from the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Along with my parliamentary colleagues, I acknowledge the work of the Queensland Family and Child Commission. I agree it is very important work when we come to looking at Child Safety oversight. There are also challenges. We have seen a significant increase in trends around child deaths across this state.

Along with my colleagues who sit on this committee, I want to highlight and note in particular that we are very keen to see the University of Queensland's red flag project and the results that will come from this study, which will potentially highlight where gaps are currently failing children across the child protection system and their recommendations around how we can improve those. I look forward to seeing the government policy that will help implement that as well.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in our system has already been highlighted. I do not think it can be highlighted enough. I note that in the statement of reservation my parliamentary colleagues raised concerns around this. When I travel the state, people refer to the work of the Carmody inquiry, its recommendations, and the practicality of how those recommendations have been implemented. It does need to be evaluated. There certainly are consistent systems failings when we see numbers increase, not decrease.

We need to have a very hard look at what is going on, where those failings are occurring and in practical terms recognise our different communities of interest. Whether it be Western Queensland, Far North Queensland, the Torres Strait or even down in parts of South-East Queensland, we need to acknowledge that our geography, communities of interest, leaders in our communities, non-government organisations and the way in which the government interacts and interfaces their child protection and youth justice services is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

What is very significant and concerning for me is the increasing rate of suicide in children, in particular around my own community. There is nothing more heartbreaking—just take a moment to acknowledge that a child is so desperate that they take their own life. I cannot fathom the loneliness of that child and what is going through their mind to come to that conclusion. It is upon all of us on all sides of the House to do everything we can to prevent child deaths through suicide.

I point to the statistics of my own Mackay, Isaac and Whitsunday, which sadly sits at 4.2 suicides per 100,000, which is the highest in the state. Cairns is at four per 100,000 and Outback Queensland is at 3.5 per 100,000—all significant numbers. It is the regional areas where we are seeing an increase

in child death by suicide. As a member of the Mental Health Select Committee, I look forward to some of the key recommendations out of that committee over the next few months. In particular, we need to address regional and rural equities with regard to mental health support and services.

It is also important that we note the work of the Child Death Review Board, which is made up of an incredible panel of individuals who are very passionate about preventing death. It is important that both side of politics work in a bipartisan way in the interests of children. This goes to the work of the commission and the reports that they develop as well as the other groups that put forward reports. I urge the Attorney-General and the minister to table reports as soon as they are finalised by the commission. They should be publicly available, because every month that passes where those key recommendations are ignored we are putting children at risk. I urge the minister to table those reports as soon as possible in the interests of transparency and continuous improvement. It should not take months. I thank the committee for their oversight and continued work along with the commission. We will continue to watch this brief.