




Speech By  
**Joan Pease**

**MEMBER FOR LYTTON**

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### **CHILD PROTECTION REFORM AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PEASE** (Lytton—ALP) (3.35 pm): I acknowledge the words of the member for Buderim and thank him for his kind and thoughtful contribution to the House. It was very touching. I appreciate him sharing his and his wife's journey and thank him very much.

I rise in support of the Child Protection Reform and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. Like those before me, I would like to acknowledge the great work of the many carers, kinship carers and foster carers who take care of the precious members of our community who might need a hand at different times in their lives. I am really fortunate that in my community there are some fabulous foster carers whom I know personally. They have contributed tens of thousands of hours to the hundreds and hundreds of children they have worked with, have loved and have maintained a relationship with for many years.

I think that everyone benefits from that relationship—the family members as well as the foster children. It is such a wonderful gift to provide love and support to children who might not necessarily have had that opportunity under other circumstances. I find equally encouraging the work that foster parents do with the biological parents of those children in making sure that they maintain a relationship as best as they can. They work with the families to make sure that they also benefit by gaining some experience in parenting, hopefully for reunification. I acknowledge the great work of carers, kinship carers and foster carers in our communities. I also acknowledge the great work of grandparents, many of whom take over the care of their grandchildren. I know that falls under kinship care but often it is not a formal arrangement. However, it is a really meaningful relationship. I acknowledge all of the grandparents who do that.

The purpose of the bill is to provide for the protection and promotion of children to the extent that it is appropriate to support families caring for children. The key term in this bill is defined through 'active efforts', meaning purposeful, thorough and timely efforts. The bill will amend the act to better support children and young people in care and streamline, clarify or improve processes. The discussion paper *Rethinking rights and regulation: towards a stronger framework for protecting children and supporting families* was released for public comment in 2019. There are three key focus areas: reinforcing children's rights in the legislative framework, strengthening children's voices in decisions that affect them and reshaping the regulation of care.

This bill makes priority amendments to the Work with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 by providing a legislative basis for the chief executive to request domestic violence information from the Queensland Police Commissioner for the purposes of blue card assessment, among other changes, which will enable a timely breakdown of barriers. Information sharing where there is more than one domestic violence order has been issued and there are different complainants is relevant to the blue card assessment. The royal commission recommended that the Commonwealth government facilitate a national model for the working with children cards, establishing a centralised database, which equals national transparency.

The achievements of the policy objectives will be met by, as I have already said: active efforts, which means efforts that are purposeful, thorough and timely, and they are required by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; ensuring children are provided with information about their rights and where they can seek help; expanding the list of rights to include rights relating to culture, religion and language, fairness, respect, development of identity, personal belongings, play and recreational activities; changing the wording of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle from 'partnership' to 'partnering', delivering individual child protection case decision-making; and strengthening a child's voice so that those engaging must genuinely engage and listen to a child's view.

To resolve technical issues arising from the Adoption Act due to the delegation instrument made under the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act, the bill retrospectively amends the Adoption Act to enable the chief executive to supervise the wellbeing and interests of non-citizen children in the custody of their prospective adoptive parents and to apply to the Children's Court for final adoption orders for non-citizen children.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is a five-element placement principle. These are: (1) the prevention principle—a child has the right to be brought up within the child's own family and community; (2) the partnership principle—a child has the right to participate in significant decisions; (3) the placement principle—if a child is to be placed in care, the child has the right to be placed with a member of the child's family group; (4) the participation principle—a child's parents and family members have a right to participate and be enabled to participate in an administrative or judicial process for making significant decisions; and (5) the connection principle—the right to be supported to develop and maintain a connection with the child's family, community and culture.

This bill expands the list of rights enshrined in the charter. Considering the rights for a child in care, the charter acknowledges the special vulnerability of children who do not have a parent able and willing to protect them. The bill expands the rights to ensure that the child is treated fairly and with respect; can develop, maintain and enjoy a connection to their culture of origin; and other rights such as to learn a language or choose a religion. Essentially, there is an emphasis on the importance of children's views and their participation in decision-making. This bill therefore makes several amendments to the act to strengthen and support existing legislative provisions and practices relating to hearing children's voices in protection decisions.

Other objectives of the bill include streamlining, clarifying and improving the regulation of care. Children and young people are cared for in several different types of arrangements including foster care, kinship care, residential care and other arrangements. The act provides for a system to approve foster and kinship carers to provide care for children and to grant licences for the provision of care services. The chief executive is responsible for deciding applications for carer approvals and licences as well as monitoring ongoing compliance with approval and licence requirements such as the standards of care in the act. Compliance will be accredited under the human services quality framework. The priority is to prevent further serious harm caused by isolation from community, family and peers.

I know that in my electorate we have the lovely and wonderful Silky Oaks Children's Haven that provides a great service for looking after families and children in care. It has done so for many years. I acknowledge the great work that it has done and will continue to do into the future.

This bill aims to make our state's child protection system the most robust in the nation. The strong commitment by the Palaszczuk Labor government to reform is ongoing, and no measure is too great to ensure that our young people are heard and are safe. I also acknowledge the great work of the minister, the Hon. Leanne Linard, and the kind and gracious manner in which she always operates. I also acknowledge the great work of the chair of the committee, the member for Mansfield, Corrine McMillan.

**An honourable member** interjected.

**Ms PEASE:** She is a very honourable woman; you are correct. I acknowledge her measured and dedicated approach to undertaking this inquiry. I thank each and every member of the committee, who worked so hard on the inquiry. I thank the secretariat for their hard work in putting it all together. I know that often the stories are difficult and hard to read and review. I thank the staff and everyone for what they have done. I commend the bill to the House.