




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Record of Proceedings, 8 November 2022

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Protection

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (10.05 am): Keeping Queensland's children and young people safe is our highest priority. My department works with some of Queensland's most vulnerable children, young people and families. Most, arguably all, come into contact with the department having experienced significant trauma.

Sadly, we are seeing an increase in the complexity of issues that families face and the number of families needing support. Too many are dealing with domestic and family violence at home, and our Child Safety staff must always take a trauma-informed approach when working with children and young people in these families. It is why we have partnered with the Safe & Together Institute to strengthen how we work with families and it is the reason we are part of the eight high-risk teams operating across the state to provide multi-agency risk assessment and safety management planning to women and children at high risk.

Many of the young people known to Child Safety have underlying mental health needs. My staff work to ensure children and young people with acute mental health issues are supported to address their harmful behaviours and the underlying causes of their behaviours in partnership with Queensland Health services, including Evolve and acute mental health services.

We know that every young person's circumstances are unique and the help we provide to keep them safe needs to be targeted to their individual needs. I have said since first being appointed to this role two years ago that we must always continue to learn, evolve and reform. We owe it to Queensland's children. Child safety practices and procedures must always be open to change, and we are always making ongoing improvements to ensure our system is as robust and strong as children deserve.

The appointment of Dr Meegan Crawford in 2020 as Queensland's first Chief Practitioner to lead our child safety officers to implement best practice and to make sure that when vulnerable families come into contact with the child protection system they receive the support they deserve has been a vital reform. It is why our systems and practice review team is required to undertake case reviews for children who have died or suffered a serious physical injury and were known to the department in the year prior to their death or injury, whether they were in our care or not, to understand what happened to the child and to determine if any changes are needed to how we work with children and young people.

Our systems and practice reviews are also considered by the independent Child Death Review Board, chaired by the Queensland Family and Child Commission Principal Commissioner. This board also considers other agency reviews, such as those from police, Queensland Health and Education Queensland, to identify ways to improve the child protection system.

We all want to see children and young people in the system provided with the support they need and connected to appropriate services. That is why we committed more than \$1.9 billion in the state budget to child and family services. This funding includes new funding to employ an additional 89

frontline child and family service workers to drive down case loads and boost services to our most vulnerable children and families. Since 2015, the Queensland government has funded an additional 782 child and family services staff. This investment, and the significant work of the department, has seen the average case load per funded full-time child safety officer sit at 16.3—down from a maximum of 21 under the previous government.

We all want Queensland children, young people, their families and communities to be safe and resilient and to have the opportunity to contribute and thrive. We will continue to work each and every day to improve our system to serve the needs of Queensland's most vulnerable children, young people and families.