




Speech By
Peter Russo
MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (3.23 pm): I move—

That the House take note of the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee Report No. 31, 57th Parliament, *Oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission*, tabled on 19 August 2022.

Under the Queensland Legislative Assembly's Standing Rules and Orders, the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee's functions are: to monitor and review the performance by the entity of the entity's functions; to report to the Legislative Assembly on any matter concerning the entity, the entity's functions or the performance of the entity's functions that the committee considers should be drawn to the Legislative Assembly's attention; to examine the annual report of the entity tabled in the Legislative Assembly and, if appropriate, to comment on any aspect of the report; and to report to the Legislative Assembly any changes to the functions, structures and procedures of the entity that the committee considers desirable for the more effective operation of the entity or the act which establishes the entity.

As a committee, we reviewed the QFCC's annual report for 2020-21 which was tabled on 30 September 2021. The committee's recommendation was that the Legislative Assembly notes the content of its report. The committee held a public hearing with representatives from the QFCC on 28 March 2022 to hear evidence as part of the committee's oversight. The QFCC is a strong organisation focused on inspiring positive changes within the systems that uphold the rights, safety and wellbeing of Queensland's children. At the public hearing, we heard from the Principal Commissioner, Luke Twyford, who commenced in his role on 31 January 2022. The committee joins with Commissioner Twyford in acknowledging the former principal commissioner, Cheryl Vardon, and the work she did in leading the commission.

Commissioner Twyford spoke of the highlights of the commission's work in the previous year, which included: Principle Focus, an exploration of the factors leading to over-representation of First Nations children in our statutory systems; Rights, Voices, Stories, a pathway through which they engaged with 11 youth researchers to build upon their lived experience in the out-of-home-care system; Growing Up in Queensland, a survey of 8,000 Queensland young people; *Measuring what matters*, a review of the impact of the implementation of the Supporting Families Changing Futures reform; and Yarning for Change, a process of speaking directly to young people involved in the youth justice system to identify from their perspectives systemic improvements. The commission also produced the first Child Death Review Board annual report, along with their analysis of 16 years of child death data.

The commissioner advised the committee that on 13 January 2022 the *Independent review of the performance of the Queensland Family and Child Commission of its functions* was tabled in parliament. The review found that the commission was delivering its legislative functions and was maintaining a significant influence within the child protection system.

Forward focus of the QFCC into 2022 and next year sees the commission remaining focused on its core objectives of raising awareness, advocating for improvement and ensuring overall system accountability. Commissioner Twyford expressed his concern about: the areas of the rising incidence of youth suicide in Queensland; the pervasiveness of domestic violence in many, if not all, of the case files that they review; the life trajectories of children who are removed from their family; and society's view of children who commit a crime.

Commissioner Natalie Lewis gave evidence to the committee with an outline of her current focus in her role at the commission. Commissioner Lewis identified that the QFCC is at a critical juncture, which presents both challenges and opportunities. She stated a commitment to embedding a child rights approach within the QFCC as a key component of the QFCC's organisational identity. It was this child rights approach that establishes a significant point of difference between the QFCC and other statutory bodies. The commission is undertaking a review of interventions with parental agreement to highlight areas of good practice.