




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 27 October 2022

LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (3.38 pm): I rise to address the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee report No. 31, and the oversight of the Queensland Family and Child Commission which involved public hearings as part of that process. The principal commissioner, the commissioner, the executive director of child death prevention and the executive director of oversight all attended the hearings to report on the range of activities undertaken by the commission in pursuit of positive changes in the systems that uphold the rights, safety and wellbeing of Queensland children.

In particular, the commission reported on the new child death register, known as Coda, which consolidates information from a range of sources including Births, Deaths and Marriages; the coroner; police; and child safety authorities to provide as much information as possible about the death of a child or a young Queenslander. As we have heard reported, child death and mortality rates have generally declined over the last 17 years, decreasing by 2.7 per cent per year, mostly due to fewer deaths by natural causes.

As we have heard, however, the commission has highlighted two trends that are not moving in the right direction. The first involves motor vehicles. As the commission reported, of the children and young people who died in Queensland in 2020-21, 19 lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes. This is the highest annual figure since 2014-15. It is heartbreaking for families and loved ones as well as our communities.

We have all seen the recent media reports of some horrific motor vehicle accidents with our young people dying or being severely injured, some suffering lifelong disabilities as a result. More than ever, we must consider further safeguarding measures such as mandatory defensive driving courses as part of obtaining P-plates. One such course is the existing RYDA, which stands for Rotary Youth Driver Awareness. This course is delivered to our high-schoolers and it is brilliant. I give a special shout-out to our Noosa RYDA volunteers for the fabulous work they do.

The second is, tragically, youth suicide, which is showing a slowly increasing trend, with 30 suicides in 2020-21. Last month I attended the Don't Bottle It Up conference hosted by our Rotary Clubs where Professor Jim from our world renowned Thompson Institute on the Sunshine Coast spoke of the importance of moving away from subjective diagnosis and treatment with mental illness to that based on neuroscience. He also highlighted the advances being made with youth depression and suicidality and the importance of immediate support being provided via psychologists, psychiatrists or counsellors should medication be given as there is a danger period in the first two weeks of commencing medication. As we know, this is not happening, and we have spoken about the wait times that must urgently be addressed as part of reducing the incidence of self-harm. In closing, I would like to thank our chair, fellow Legal Affairs and Safety Committee members and our secretariat as well as the commission for the incredible work they do in this most important undertaking in creating greater safety for our children.