




Speech By
Amanda Camm

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

Record of Proceedings, 23 February 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Child Protection

 **Ms CAMM** (Whitsunday—LNP) (2.06 pm): Much has been said about the child safety system in this chamber in the last few days. What has not been acknowledged in the contributions of any of those opposite is the mistakes that have been made by this government—the failures that have happened time and time again and have left some of our most vulnerable children open to harm.

This minister has every excuse in the book, but there needs to be a recognition and accountability for the mistakes and for reforms that have not been carried out. The minister should stop using the privacy provisions of the legislation that are designed to protect children instead of protect the minister. Darcey-Helen and Chloe-Ann Conley deserve more than what this government has done for them. I will read to the House an excerpt from Justice Applegarth's judgement in the mother's case. He stated—

When their dead bodies were discovered, their skin was badly blistered.

They had suffered dehydration.

One can only hope that these little girls slowly succumbed to the growing heat of the day much earlier that morning and faded into a deep sleep from which they never returned.

As hard as it is, and as a mother myself, I find it devastating that this happened to two little girls on this government's watch. We must force ourselves to turn our minds to this tragedy. We must examine what has gone wrong. What went so wrong that a mother left her children in a car? She had a clear history of substance abuse, which the children were exposed to and which put them at great risk. The case was closed by the department. Their father should have more than fingerprints on a dirty door to remember them by. These are only two children, but there are many more who have been failed by three ministers. Many other children have died and many other children are currently in harm's way.

The commission of inquiry, for the benefit of the Attorney-General, who commented on it today, was in fact 10 years ago. We should be much further along than we are. We have a brave whistleblower who has come out today and said her case load exceeded 20 cases. I sure hope the minister has reached out to that brave young woman. Recommendation 10.4 of that commission of inquiry recommended the case loads of child safety officers not exceed average cases of 15. In states like New South Wales they have capped case loads.

Too many children are in danger. Too many are being swept aside by this government as a political problem rather than the vulnerable humans they are. If I hear one more excuse about the COVID impacts that are prohibiting the government from doing the job they should have been doing all along, I think I will scream in this House. The minister needs to step up and be accountable because this government is not keeping vulnerable Queensland children safe.