

**Question on Notice
No. 1078
Asked on 28 September 2004**

MS STONE asked the Minister for Child Safety (MR REYNOLDS)-

QUESTION:

What is the progress of the implementation of recommendations from the Peter Forster report on Child Protection in Queensland?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for her question and for her continued interest in the area of Child Safety. I am pleased to advise of the progress made by my department in relation to the implementation of the Peter Forster Blueprint.

In March 2004, a Blueprint was released for implementing the 110 recommendations of the January 2004 Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) Report *Protecting Children: An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care*, and the December 2003 *Audit of Foster Carers Subject to Child Protection Notifications*.

The Department of Child Safety is on track to implementing the 110 recommendations of the CMC report in line with the timeframes set out in the blueprint. We are working towards having the majority of the CMC recommendations fully implemented by the beginning of 2006.

On 24 September 2004, I publicly launched the new Department of Child Safety, which is focused exclusively on child protection functions and is the lead agency in a whole-of-government response to child protection. On that day I also launched a progress report which provides a snapshot of the department's progress over the last six months in implementing the Blueprint.

A number of significant achievements in the reform agenda have been reached in the past six months, including:

- the government allocated \$269 million operational and \$35 million capital funding to the department in the 2004-05 State Budget;
- a major recruitment drive was developed, with the department now well advanced in recruiting 318 additional frontline and para-professional support positions;
- the department's organisational profile has been determined, with direct child safety services to be delivered progressively from seven zones and 46 Child Safety Service Centres;
- the Director-General and Deputy Director-General have been appointed;

- acting Senior Executive Directors, Zonal Directors and the Director of the Indigenous Support and Development Unit have been appointed, with recruitment and selection processes for permanent appointments currently underway;
- on 24 September 2004, the positions of Child Safety Service Centre Manager (46), Senior Practitioner (19), Team Leader (138) and Court Coordinator (33) were advertised;
- a comprehensive staff training program has been established;
- an additional 134 alternative care places have been funded, with an investment of \$13.2 million in 2004-2005;
- foster care allowances have been increased with an interim across-the-board increase of \$40 a fortnight;
- since July 2004, foster carers who look after children and young people with high or complex support needs started receiving an extra \$24 each fortnight to reflect the additional demands, and carers of babies aged 0-1 years received an extra \$20 each fortnight. The one-off establishment payment for foster carers increased from \$200 to \$375, and the start-up payment also increased from \$50 to \$60;
- the Child Safety Legislation Amendment Act 2004, was passed on 16 June 2004 completing the Stage One legislative reforms set out in the Blueprint;
- on 20 October 2004, the Parliament passed the Stage Two legislative reforms. These reforms include:
 - longer term machinery of Government legislation for the Department of Child Safety;
 - mandatory reporting for doctors and registered nurses;
 - legislating for SCAN teams;
 - disclosure of information to carers;
 - duty of disclosure to departments and non-government organisations;
 - development of case plans for children in care;
 - submission of case plans to the court; and
 - refining guardianship orders and short term protection orders;
- an extra \$24.4 million will go to create a more integrated Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) system over the next three years, with pilot programs commenced in Logan and Townsville on 20 September 2004;
- the new Indigenous Support and Development Unit in Cairns to support Indigenous organisations was announced on 23 July 2004. The acting Director of the Unit commenced officially on 11 October 2004 and took up duty in Cairns on 14 October 2004;
- the Statewide Child Protection Partnership Taskforce commenced in July 2004, and is meeting monthly to progress partnership arrangements between the department and key stakeholders with an interest in child protection service delivery;
- a multi-agency network of Child Safety Directors has been established to coordinate and focus the child-centred efforts of the Department of Child Safety and its ten government partners in child protection; and
- a multi-agency project team has progressed the development of enhanced services for children in care. In 2005, the department (in collaboration with Queensland Health and Disability Services Queensland) will commence a program to expand therapeutic care options and treatment programs for children in care with severe psychological and behavioural problems. This includes establishing five additional specialist mental health units for children and young people with specialist needs.