

## Question on Notice

No. 1834

Asked on Tuesday 24 November 2009

**MR PITT** ASKED THE MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICES AND HOUSING AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN (MS STRUTHERS)—

As I returned last week from the national capital, where I represented the Queensland Government at the apology to the Forgotten Australians and child migrants—

Will the Minister advise what action the Queensland Government has taken, and is taking, to help ensure that the practices of the past will never be repeated?

### **ANSWER:**

In response to the recommendations of the 1999 report by the *Commission of Inquiry into the Abuse of Children in Queensland Institutions*, the Queensland Government has implemented major reform in the areas of child protection practices, youth detention services and the redress of past abuse.

Since 2000, the Queensland Government has funded community based counselling and support services specifically targeting the needs of victims of abuse. In tandem with this, the Forde Foundation was established as a perpetual, charitable trust to benefit former State wards and residents of our children's institutions. The Queensland Government contributed \$4.15 million to the trust.

In 2007, the Queensland Government established a \$100 million Redress Scheme to provide *ex-gratia* payments to victims of abuse and neglect in Queensland's children's institutions, as a result of the outcome of the Forde Inquiry. Applications closed in September 2008 and over 10,000 applications were received.

Additionally, a range of legislative and judicial safeguards now exist in this State to ensure the practices of the past will never be repeated.

The Queensland Government's commitment to providing child focussed services is underpinned by legislation which requires that decisions relating to children and young people in care must always be made in their best interests.

The Queensland Government has been undertaking significant work on reorientation of the child protection system to strengthen secondary services and provide much needed support to families to prevent escalation into out-of-home care.

The Queensland child protection system and youth detention services are more accountable than ever and are overseen by the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian which has a legislative mandate to promote and protect the rights, interests and wellbeing of young Queenslanders.

The Commission has extensive powers to monitor, investigate and report on whether:

- effective systems and support services for children in care are being maintained;
- children's rights are being upheld; and
- access to early intervention services is available.

In addition, the Commission contributes to safe and supportive service environments for children and young people in out-of-home care through administration of the Queensland Blue Card system. All approved carers in Queensland must now hold a blue card which

involves a thorough criminal history check. The ongoing eligibility of approved carers to hold a blue card is monitored by the Commission on a daily basis.

A range of other safeguards are in place for children through strengthened external accountability measures including:

- the Community Visitor Program, operated by the Commission, which ensures regular visits to all children and young people in out-of-home care and provides access to independent advocacy; and
- oversight of services provided to, and decisions made in respect of, children subject to statutory interventions by the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.