



**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**  
**THURSDAY 03<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST 2017**  
**CHILD ABUSE REPORTS**

**Mr PEDERICK (Hammond) (12:23):** I rise to support the motion moved by the member for Adelaide:

That this house condemns the Labor government's record on child protection and in particular notes—

(a) the average waiting times on the Child Abuse Report Line having extended greater than one hour in 2016, compared to 10 minutes in 2012 and 20 minutes in 2015;

(b) that over 200 children and young people currently live in emergency care as compared to zero in 2002;

(c) that almost half of calls to the Child Abuse Report Line go unanswered and of those answered, the majority are closed with no action due to a lack of resourcing; and

(d) the number of children under the guardianship of the minister has reached a record high of 3,280, showing that more needs to be done in the areas of prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation.

Before I get into the substance of my speech, I congratulate the member for Adelaide on not only bringing this motion to the house but taking on a very difficult portfolio. I would like to briefly make a comment on what some members on the other side seem to like taking as a personal attack, like the member for Fisher. When she is in this place, she tells us about her past life and her career. We hear it a lot and that is her call.

I acknowledge what the member for Adelaide has done in her previous life in running a very successful business, but she does not have to get up and scream it from the rafters every five minutes. She does not have to do that because her record speaks for itself, both in this house and previously in her work record, in running a very successful business and employing many people, and still keeping in contact with those people today as friends and colleagues. I think people should focus more on what we are discussing.

In regard to the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission, which was established in August 2014 to investigate the adequacy of the child protection system in South Australia, I note that we have had many reports over the time of this Labor government. The final report of the Child Protection Systems Royal Commission was delivered to the Governor in

August 2016 and then we saw on 1 November of that year a new Department for Child Protection was established.

Of the 260 recommendations that came from the Nyland commission, the government confirmed that, after they had some consultation with the community sector, it had accepted 196 of those recommendations, agreed in principle with a further 60, and chose not to adopt four. That was as of late 2016 in November.

It is interesting to note that a lot of money has been put forward, but it has not achieved the results that we should have achieved in regard to child protection. The government made a commitment of \$432 million over four years for statewide child protection reform and additional support for children in out-of-home care. I will just detail some of the things that they said they were going to do:

\$299 million for additional staff, resources and new initiatives in out-of-home care;

an additional \$45 million for early intervention programs and services, including the establishment of an Early Intervention Research Directorate, funding for the Family by Family program, \$9 million to establish three pilot child and family assessment and referral networks in northern, central and southern metropolitan Adelaide, and a further \$5 million per annum for early intervention programs and services;

\$26 million to improve the government's investigations and response capabilities, including an additional \$10 million for professional development and training of Department for Child Protection staff;

\$6 million to establish the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People;

\$6 million to establish a child protection service at the Lyell McEwin Hospital;

\$13 million to improve the Child Abuse Report Line; and

an additional \$10.8 million for support for young people transitioning from care.

I note that, as of late last year in 2016, over 3,000 children were in out-of-home care and, of those, there were 1,495 in relatives care or kinship care, 1,301 in foster care, 333 in state-run residential care and 181 in emergency care, which is in motels and other accommodation similar to that. There are over 200 now in emergency care and at that stage there were 39 living independently.

There are predictions that the number of children living in out-of-home care could rise to as much as over 3,500, which since 2010-11 is a 48.6 per cent increase. We saw that, in 2015-16, 821 children were placed on legal authority for the first time. In June 2016, 190 children were in emergency care; an average of 157 days for children in emergency care; and a cost of \$600,000 for the month of June in 2015.

With regard to the Child Abuse Report Line, there is an inquest backlog. At four years, 18 per cent of cases are still open in South Australia. We can compare that with 2 per cent in the Northern Territory and 7 per cent in New South Wales. In 2015-16, there were 912 drug

tests. Regarding the Child Abuse Report Line, only 62 per cent of calls were answered in December 2016 and only 58 per cent were answered in 2015-16. At the moment, the average wait time to get through on the Child Abuse Report Line is over one hour—it is outrageous.

One in four children in the state is the subject of a notification to authorities. This was admitted by the Premier in a media release on 29 November 2016. As far as reported notifications and screened-in notifications are concerned, in 2015-16 there were 54,704 reported notifications and 21,427 screened-in notifications. That tells us that overall 39 per cent of reports were screened in. There was a backlog of 1,500 around the middle of 2016. There were 21,500 projected notifications of abuse or neglect assessed as requiring further action, which were screened in in 2015-16. There were 5,375 projected investigations of child abuse notifications and 2,258 projected child protection notifications that were substantiated.

After all those many hundreds of millions of dollars, we have a major problem in this state with child protection. It is ridiculous that people get on the Child Abuse Report Line and have to wait an hour for their call to be taken. We absolutely have to make sure that our most vulnerable children are looked after. We have to look at the policies that see children, through no fault of their own, end up as renegades by the time they are three or four. Essentially, in my mind, a lot of these children are lost to society.

It takes much management, with up to a dozen staff attending schools to look after a single incident with one child. I think there needs to be far better management and far better help. I know of one lady who has had at least 14 children and they are just taken at birth by order. We have to do far more for our children. Instead of just throwing money, the government must make sure that their policies are effective.