




Speech By
Shane King

MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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ADJOURNMENT

Care Bag Appeal; Child Protection

 **Mr KING** (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.09 pm): I rise tonight for a wonderful and worthy cause: the Care Bag Appeal by community organisation Sweet Dreams and Goodnight Wishes. For those who do not know, care bags are put together for children entering foster care who sadly sometimes leave home with nothing but the clothes on their backs. These care bags include a set of clothes, pyjamas, underwear and socks, toothbrush, a hair brush, backpack and a comfort item such as a stuffed toy, colouring-in materials or a book. Judging by the bags dropped off to my office so far, they often contain optional extras like hats, water bottles or sleeping bags. Care bags contain only new items for health reasons, particularly during this COVID-19 pandemic. I sincerely thank all those kind-hearted people who have gone above and beyond in purchasing these items for vulnerable children in need, and thanks to Sweet Dreams and Goodnight Wishes for the work they do on this appeal all year round.

This is the second year my office has been a drop-off point for care bags. Last year we collected 84 bags. This year COVID-19 has made things tougher and budgets are tighter, but I am proud to say we have collected nearly 50 bags with a special effort from Peace of Mind Kindergarten which delivered 28 bags the other day—thanks! The final day for drop-off is this Friday. If you can afford to donate please do it this week. It is so important we provide support for our foster-care system as a community and as a government. We are recruiting for foster carers right now, and I echo the call from my colleague the Minister for Child Safety for those Queenslanders with extraordinary hearts to please put their hands up. Thank you to all those unsung heroes out there who have given the ultimate gift by becoming foster carers.

I also want to thank the minister for her own extraordinary work. With around 10,000 children in need of out-of-home care and just over half that number of foster-care families, it is a tough job, which is why I was astounded last sitting week when opposition members came in here thinking they had all the answers. This is the same party that cut funding to the department of child safety when it was in government, the same party that stood by while staffing levels dropped and case loads did the opposite. Those opposite do not have all the answers. None of us do when it comes to child safety.

As long as there is domestic and family violence, as long as there are drugs and alcohol, as long as mental health problems exist there will always be challenges around protecting every vulnerable child. What we can do, and what I know our government will continue to do every day, is to work our hardest to try first and foremost to work with parents to help them make the best choices for children. Where they cannot or will not, we will fund, recruit and train the best support networks possible, from child safety workers to foster carers, for those children who, through no fault of their own, can no longer live with mum and dad.