

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Parliament House
Alice and George Streets
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 21 August 2003 forwarding a copy of a petition tabled in Parliament on 19 August 2003 concerning current legislation in relation to permanency planning for children and young people in long-term care of the Department of Families.

In July 2002, the Queensland Government announced its cornerstone policy statement for the State's most vulnerable children and families, titled *Queensland Families: Future Directions*. Through this initiative, an additional \$188 million over four years was made available to the Department of Families for a range of strategies designed to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The recent 2003-2004 budget delivered the second instalment of funding of \$42 million to the department to implement strategies from *Future Directions*.

In May this year, a discussion paper titled *Stopping the Drift: improving the lives of Queensland's children and young people in long-term care* was publicly released. I consider this paper the first step in encouraging the public discussion about the rights of children and young people to long-term, stable and secure care. This paper tackles the difficult issues connected with making decisions to place children and young people in the long-term care of someone other than their parents. Departmental staff have conducted a statewide consultation in association with the release of the discussion paper. Feedback provided from the consultations by individuals and key stakeholders is currently being collated and analysed. The Queensland Cabinet will consider the finding of the consultation later this year.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

Judy Spence MP
Minister for Families and Minister for Seniors