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State Funds to help bring families back together

Lifeline will receive almost \$350,000 per annum from the Department of Child Safety over the next three years to provide a range of family reunification support services to local children and families in the Ipswich and Ipswich West areas, the Minister for Child Safety Mike Reynolds and Local Members Rachel Nolan and Don Livingstone announced today.

17 Queensland organisations, including Ipswich and West Moreton Lifeline, will share in more than \$2.9 million in funding over three years and one-off funds of more than \$278,000.

"Family reunification services have long been recognised as having significant benefits to children and young people in alternative care, as well as their families and carers," Mr Reynolds said.

"Our priority in 2004-05 will be to work with children and their families within the first 12 months of entry into care and to implement processes that engage family members and significant members of the child's cultural community in decision making," he said.

Ms Nolan said that according to research, the majority of children in care returned to their families, with protective placement only a temporary experience.

"The aim of this initiative is to promote the safe reunification of children and young people in alternative care with their family and the community," Ms Nolan said.

Mr Livingstone said Ipswich and West Moreton Lifeline would receive more than \$350,000 in recurrent funding over the next three years and one-off funding of \$21,000 to support safe reunifications for children in care with their family, where it is in the best interests of the child.

"Where returning home is not possible, the aim of such services is to establish a long-term placement option that also meets the child's needs for connection with family and the community, stability and a sense of belonging," Mr Livingstone said.

Mr Reynolds said that services targeted at specifically supporting the family reunification process for Indigenous children in protective care would also benefit from the funding.

"There remains significant over-representation of Indigenous children and young people in the alternative care system," Mr Reynolds said.

"In response to this, we have allocated 19 per cent of the total available funding to Indigenous family reunification services," he said.

Mr Reynolds said the funding pool was part of a \$3.12 funding commitment to family reunification services in 2004-05, with the remaining \$219,000 to be held in reserve until further developments could be made to ensure all areas of Queensland benefited from the initiative.

A second new funding instalment of \$ 1.56 million will be available in 2005-06 with total funding for the family reunification initiative rising to \$6.24 million in the 2006-07 financial year.