



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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Hansard 22 October 1998

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL APPROPRIATION BILL**

**Committee (Cognate Debate)**

**Estimates Committee D**

**Report**

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (12.04 p.m.): I start by thanking all members of Estimates Committee D for their work in bringing together this year's Estimates. I particularly congratulate the Chair, the member for Chermside, for his expert guidance of the deliberations of the committee. I also recognise the hard work of the staff of the committee, my own ministerial staff and the staff of the department who, as always, have put in an outstanding effort.

The first Budget of the Beattie Labor Government in this portfolio is the largest allocation in the history of the agency. By the time that this Government is introducing its fourth Budget in the year 2001, we will have injected nearly \$280m into the base funding of the agency. People with disabilities, their families and support services have received the biggest ever single injection of funds. An allocation in excess of \$126m over four years will be used to address the unmet needs in disability services right across the State and will substantially address and repair the neglect of this sector by the previous Government.

In this Budget we kept our promise on disability funding. In one Budget we have achieved what the coalition Government comprehensively failed to do in three Budgets. We have provided \$30m worth of funding into disability services—twice what the member for Indooroopilly squandered on the Connolly/Ryan inquiry. The Budget also provides a \$25m increase over four years to community sector organisations to meet their industrial obligations. Those organisations will now be able to provide services and adequately reward their committed and often overworked staff. This commitment stands in stark contrast to the attitude of the previous Government. The Minister for Health at the time, the member for Toowoomba South, stated—

"There are few better examples of the greed and callousness of the Union movement than the Social and Community Services (SACS) Award. The actions of Labor's mates, the ASU, in pursuing this award against the wishes of many working in the voluntary and non Government sector, were calculated to strike at the aged, the sick and the poor ..."

This Government does not regard the industrial rights of workers in that way.

The Budget commits \$17m to new child-care initiatives. The package of funds will improve the quality of child care through facility upgrades and equipment purchases, the construction of three new centres and expanded outside school hours care programs. Ours is the only State Government in Australia that is taking any action to redress the effects of the savage attacks on child care by the Howard Government.

Older Queenslanders have not been forgotten. Not only have we reintroduced the motor vehicle registration concession, benefiting more than 28,000 Seniors Card holders but also the ambulance subscription concession to be administered by my department will see free ambulance cover for seniors. In addition, this budget includes funds to establish three pilot juvenile justice centres, provides for the relocation of Basil Stafford residents, and funds the implementation of youth suicide prevention

strategies and juvenile crime prevention programs. This is a good-news Budget for all who care about the health and wellbeing of our children, our families and our communities.

What does the member for Indooroopilly have to say about this budget in his dissenting report, which I believe can only be described as churlish, mealy mouthed and mean spirited? Firstly, he expresses concern about whether any of the \$209,000 for machinery of Government changes was expended on signage. I answered this question both on notice and in the hearings. He has presented nothing to refute my answer, which stands. He goes on to express concern about a question on notice regarding task forces. I clarified the member's concern in detail at the hearings, yet he continues to fail to provide contradictory information. Yesterday afternoon in the Chamber, he was unable to name one task force, one review or any such thing that I had instituted and not brought to the attention of the committee. The Government's commitment to increasing the staffing resources in child protection is also questioned. Again, the documents provided and my answers to the committee do not substantiate his concerns. His concerns are not serious. If they were and he seriously believed that I had misled the committee, he would be taking further action.

The comments of the member for Indooroopilly regarding the Forde inquiry are simply disgraceful. To use the dissenting report to make those comments is little more than another grubby attempt by him to undermine the inquiry and besmirch the character of one of the commissioners. In the dissenting report the member repeats the false accusation that Mr Hans Heilpern was sacked from his position as director-general when he knows this to be false. He has been unable to present any evidence to the contrary to the Parliament. It was not the subject of any discussion at Estimates Committee D and, in my view, is inappropriately placed in the dissenting report. The attacks by the member make a mockery of the Opposition's so-called claims to support the Forde inquiry. The member for Indooroopilly and the Opposition continue to attempt to undermine a very serious inquiry by trying to score cheap political points. The comments of the member for Indooroopilly regarding the Children's Commissioner are similarly appalling. I commend the budget for this portfolio to the Committee.

Time expired.

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