



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

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Hansard 11 November 1998

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Installation of Audio Loop in Parliamentary Annexe**

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (9.58 a.m.), by leave: For the information of honourable members, I wish to announce that the Parliamentary Annexe now has the additional facility of a permanent audio loop system, which enables hearing aid wearers access to sound direct, without any extraneous noise or interference. The need for an audio loop was identified at a function for disability services which I hosted in the function room of the Parliamentary Annexe in August. The absence of a loop at this function meant that people who were hearing impaired were unable to access any of the speeches given.

This problem was drawn to my attention by representatives of Better Hearing Australia who were present at the function. I raised with the Speaker my concern about this lack of access for people who are hearing impaired, and he acted swiftly to address the situation. I am pleased to inform members that the Speaker has ordered the permanent installation of a hearing loop for the function rooms in the Parliamentary Annexe. As the loop will be operated from an amplifier in the sound room, it is not practical to have it switched on at all times. Therefore, the service will be routinely offered when venues are booked, as already occurs with sound equipment and so forth.

This action has been taken in recognition of the needs of many people in our community who are deaf or hearing impaired. No longer will people with these disabilities be disadvantaged in the forums, seminars and presentations which are held in the Annexe.

I would like to put on record my thanks to Alexis Lonngren of Better Hearing Australia for outstanding advocacy on behalf of people with a hearing impairment. I also wish to congratulate the Speaker and parliamentary officers for acting so swiftly to address this access issue for people who are hearing impaired. I would also encourage the many members who routinely host and organise functions in these rooms to use the hearing loop system when it is installed.

The installation of the hearing loop is evidence of this Government's continuing commitment to respond effectively to the needs of people with a disability, together with our recognition of the need for interpreters, alternative print formats and physical access. It sets a new standard for public presentations and will no doubt be appreciated by the many citizens of our State with a hearing disability. The challenge for us now is to make sure that what we say is worth listening to.

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