



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Urgent and Critical Needs of People with a Disability

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10.01 a.m.), by leave: Few members could fail to be aware of the urgent and critical needs of people with a disability and their families in Queensland. Equally, members would be aware of the comprehensive failure of the coalition Government to address these needs during its time in office. Not only did the Borbidge Government fail in each of its Budgets to meet its election promise of \$34m of new funds per year but also it compounded the crisis for existing services by refusing to pass on Commonwealth CPI increases to which those services were entitled. While it did provide short-term funding for school leavers through the Moving Ahead Program, it ignored the consequences of that short-term political fix and the question of what would happen to those young people at the end of their two-year program. The Borbidge Government ignored the escalating crisis in disability to the extent that there was no funding round at all in 1997. The Borbidge Government was prepared to leave people with disabilities and their families with no hope and many living in despair.

In stark contrast to this neglect and betrayal, the Beattie Labor Government will make the delivery of services to people with a disability one of the hallmarks of our time in Government. I am pleased to announce to honourable members that the new deal for people with disabilities in Queensland, promised in Labor's election policy "A New Beginning for Disability Services", has begun. I have recently approved adult support packages totalling \$3m for 71 individuals: 55 new packages of support were provided to individuals and families, and 16 individuals gained enhancements to existing packages in response to their changed circumstances.

This funding will provide a range of flexible service responses in the areas of accommodation, community access and family support. Unlike a previous coalition Minister, the member for Beaudesert, who allocated scarce funds on the basis of personal influence and electorate, this funding was allocated only to individuals and families in critical need. My regional offices across the State used objective criteria to prioritise individuals and families whose current critical circumstances required an immediate response. The funding has been allocated on a recurrent basis to community organisations to provide ongoing support for these individuals and their families.

The highest priority for funding was given to people who were homeless, or at risk of homelessness; had no-one to act as a carer, or had only a limited support network; had limited or no access to services; were living in inappropriate accommodation such as nursing homes, or were at risk of institutionalisation; had caregivers who were frail and ageing or were experiencing ill health; or were at significant risk of abuse. Some examples of the critical needs which have been addressed by this funding include a young woman who was able to escape an abusive living arrangement and move to independent living in the community; a person with spinal injuries who was able to leave an inappropriate placement in hospital; a number of people who were assisted to relocate from respite facilities to community living; and some young people who had been supported under the Kids in Care program but who, having turned 18, were no longer eligible for that program and who have been provided with ongoing support to live in the community.

This funding is "the new beginning" promised by the Beattie Labor Government for people with disabilities in Queensland. The 1998-99 Budget provided a record \$126.2m funding package for unmet need. This is the largest financial commitment to people with disabilities ever made by a Queensland

Government. The funding will be allocated through a number of funding rounds. I am pleased to announce that the first of these, for adult lifestyle packages, will be advertised in metropolitan and regional newspapers this Saturday, 14 November. I encourage all members to draw the availability of these funds to the attention of people with disabilities, their families and disability service providers in their electorates. I look forward to keeping honourable members fully informed of the Government's many achievements in this area.
