



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard 25 March 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Funding

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: The Beattie Labor Government has delivered one of its key election commitments in the September 1998 Budget by providing \$30m to assist people with a disability and their families. As I have said before, this is the largest single financial commitment made to the disability sector by any Government in the history of Queensland.

This record commitment stands in stark contrast to the shameful record of the previous coalition Government, which failed for three Budgets in a row to deliver its \$34m election promise to people with a disability. I am proud to say that the Beattie can-do Labor Government has delivered what the coalition not only could not but did not. This Government has delivered a record sum to help address the critical levels of unmet need brought about by decades of neglect. I am proud to inform the House that this \$30m in additional recurrent funds will assist at least 600 Queensland adults and children with disabilities and their families this year.

The allocation of this funding has begun. After three years of inaction by the former Government there was such a crisis in the disability sector when I became Minister that last November I approved immediate funding of \$2m for 48 people in urgent and critical need. Those individual packages will improve the quality of life of people with disabilities living in the community. In order to illustrate the level of unmet need in the community, I inform the House that more than 3,000 people have registered with my department for support since the funds were advertised late last year. This week, I approved a further 199 individual packages across Queensland as part of the first round of funding. This is a quantum leap forward. For most of those people, it is the first time that they have ever received any Government support.

Some of the people who have received support include: a 26-year-old man with a psychiatric disability and no family to support him; a 35-year-old woman with autism spectrum disorder whose elderly mother is so ill that she can no longer support her daughter; and three young people who have just turned 18 and who would be homeless and at risk of injury and abuse without funding. For those hundreds of people who did not receive funding the first time around, another funding round will be advertised this Saturday and a third in July.

To ensure that these funds are allocated fairly, my department developed a transparent process through the establishment of priority panels in the five departmental regions. The pilot priority panels have, for the first time ever, introduced a transparency and fairness to the allocation of scarce resources, and the process further establishes a positive working partnership between Government, my department and the community sector. Together we have taken an enormous step forward in developing a fairer and more open society for Queenslanders.

Not only will this significant injection of funds improve the quality of life for hundreds of needy Queenslanders, I am proud to say that throughout this year it will also deliver nearly 800 jobs in the community services industry. The funding I have outlined this morning marks the first step towards addressing the high levels of unmet need in this State and marks a new beginning for disability services in Queensland.