



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard 26 May 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
CASH Award

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: Today I wish to inform the House of the implementation of yet another important election commitment of the Beattie Government, namely, support for award wages and conditions for workers in the crisis and short-term accommodation sector. This morning there will be a satellite broadcast to staff and management committees of Queensland's crisis accommodation services in 40 sites across Queensland. These services are funded through the joint Commonwealth/State Supported Assistance Accommodation Program. This morning's broadcast will inform these services about the provision and implementations of the Crisis Assistance and Supported Housing, or CASH, Award.

The implementation of the CASH Award is an important event for workers and service providers in the crisis accommodation sector. It will mean that employees in this sector will now enjoy the benefits and security of an award. This is especially important in an industry which has predominantly employed women. The award will also bring benefits to the community services industry as a whole by fostering a more stable and appropriately paid work force.

Under the previous Government, the community sector was undervalued, underresourced and ignored. The Beattie Government recognises the invaluable work of this sector in delivering badly needed services to communities in partnership with Government. In recognition of this contribution, in Opposition we promised to assist these services with the implementation of awards, and we have now delivered on that promise.

In the last State Budget our Government committed approximately \$25m over four years, or \$6.5m per annum, to assist services to meet their industrial obligations. This amount represented our State's portion of the funds to assist with award implementation. After much deliberation and lobbying from the Queensland Government, the Commonwealth also recently committed funds to meet its own share of the required supplementation in the 11 May Federal Budget. Through this funding I have approved grants of approximately \$2.2m to more than 140 SAAP services to assist with award implementation. These grants are backdated to 12 April, when the award took effect, to 30 September 1999 this year. These funds will assist services with the award's phasing-in provisions for increases in base rate salaries. I have also approved funds to assist with penalty payments for night and weekend work and for on-call and sleep-over allowances.

The implementation of the CASH Award is yet another example of our Government's commitment to the provision of services through our SAAP program for people who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless. Members may be aware that the current five-year SAAP program agreement is due to expire at the end of this year. Under this agreement, about 12,500 Queenslanders who are homeless are provided with transitional supported accommodation and related support services. This includes families, single men and women, young people and women escaping domestic violence with their children.

We will be negotiating the new SAAP agreement with the Commonwealth throughout the rest of this year. A major negotiating issue will be the badly needed growth funds for SAAP services. The need for these growth funds was illustrated by a recent national evaluation commissioned by the

Commonwealth Government, which found that an extra 25% in growth funds is needed to keep this program viable. Unfortunately, the recent Commonwealth Budget shows that the Commonwealth has made no provision at this stage for these growth funds. I wish to assure members of the House and those working in this sector that the Queensland Government will continue to press for growth funds with the Commonwealth to ensure that people in this State who are homeless or who are at risk of becoming homeless are provided with adequate services.
