



Speech by

**Hon. ANNA BLIGH**

**MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE**

---

Hansard 20 July 1999

#### **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

##### **Disability Access Week**

**Hon. A. M. BLIGH** (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Families, Youth and Community Care and Minister for Disability Services) (10.06 a.m.), by leave: Last week was Disability Access Week. Disability Access Week is an important event for the whole community. Each year, this week highlights the experiences, achievements and issues faced by people with a disability throughout Queensland. This year, more than 50 events were held throughout the State from Atherton to the Gold Coast and Mount Isa to Gladstone.

Each year Queenslanders are recognised during this week for their contribution to making our community more accessible to people with a disability. This year, 10 individuals and organisations from across the State were presented with awards for making a difference. I congratulate the winners of these awards and all those individuals and organisations who do so much to make this important week a success and make such a difference in the other 51 weeks of the year.

Along with the awards, a significant announcement marked the beginning of this year's access week. That announcement was the Beattie Government's decision to establish a separate Department of Disability Services in Queensland. This is the latest of a long list of achievements by our Government in the area of disability and the delivery of yet another key election promise. I would like to take this opportunity to briefly outline some of the significant achievements we have already made in reforming the disability sector in our first 12 months of office. On coming to Government we were faced with many issues and problems—

- firstly and most importantly, a crisis in unmet need for basic services for people with a disability;
- potential homelessness for the remaining residents of the Challinor Centre;
- a viability crisis for many service providers throughout the State;
- no funds for those seeking to leave the Basil Stafford Centre;
- ongoing conflict between the Cootharinga Society of North Queensland and families of former residents; and
- an absence of any reliable information on need or accountable processes to allocate scarce resources.

Within 12 months we are well on the way to solving all of these outstanding issues. One centre is already under construction at Loganlea and a second site has been found in Brisbane's northern suburbs to build new homes for the former residents of Challinor. We have implemented award supplementation and other non-recurrent grants to help struggling service providers remain viable. A reconciliation process is under way for all those affected by the Cootharinga report.

As well as cleaning up the mess left by the previous Government, our Government has done what the previous Government never even tried to achieve. We have successfully laid the foundation for much needed change in disability services. The largest amount of funding by a Queensland State Government ever has been injected into disability services by this Labor Government: \$30m to address unmet need and \$11.6m to relocate those people who wish to leave the Basil Stafford Centre.

We have established a register of unmet need. For the first time the Government knows the extent of unmet need in Queensland and the nature of each individual circumstance and the type of

help they require. People with unmet need are now no longer statistics. Queensland has our first list of real people with real needs. It is a huge step forward and affects the constituents of every member of this House. We have changed our thinking. We have moved to more individualised funding support packages. What we have started to do is to fit services to people, instead of people to services. We have invented a fair and open funding process from the ground up, and just last week we announced as our contribution to Disability Access Week, Cabinet approval to establish a new agency, Disability Services Queensland, which will drive continued reform in this important sector.

I am proud of the Beattie Labor Government's commitment to improve the lives of Queenslanders with disabilities and their families. Our achievements in disability are one of the hallmarks of this Government. Twelve months ago none of this existed. Though there is still much more to be done, our Government has come a very long way.

---