



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

Hansard 18 May 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Services Funding; Care Independent Living Association

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: I wish to assure Queenslanders with a disability and their families that the Beattie Government is committed to a fair and transparent funding process based on need. I wish to correct for the record some inaccurate and offensive statements made about these processes by the member for Indooroopilly in this House. The member for Indooroopilly has accused this Government of funding people with disabilities based on media pressure. Nothing could be further from the truth. That in fact is the way things used to work under the coalition Government, but not under this Government.

For the very first time in Queensland history, the Beattie Government has cared enough about people with disabilities to actually find out how many people in our community are still without support. As a result, Queensland now has for the first time a register of unmet need. There are 4,607 people on that register, and each one of them has been given a priority ranking depending on the urgency of their need. This prioritisation process is done at a local level by local service providers, staff of Disability Services Queensland, people with disabilities and their families. Available funds are then allocated to those people, as they should be, with the highest priority need. This is a fair and transparent funding process. It was established by this Government to prevent the "squeaky wheel" funding approach which thrived under the previous Government. The coalition did not fund on the basis of need; it funded on the basis of a whim.

This brings me to the difficult situation facing the Care Independent Living Association on Bribie Island. It is experiencing some financial troubles today, largely because of the whimsical and unethical funding style of the former Government.

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Ms BLIGH: That is exactly right. The honourable member could not have said it better.

This service was established by a caring father, Dr Lewin, seeking to support his daughter with a disability. I am advised by Dr Lewin that the service purchased buildings on the basis of a wink and a nod from the former Government. When I took over this Ministry, I met with Dr Lewin and investigated his claim of an agreement, only to find that there was no documented evidence of any agreement and that no funding was available for allocation to the service for the purchase of these buildings. Unfortunately, Dr Lewin trusted the verbal agreement that he received from the former Government. But that agreement was not kept and there was no evidence that the coalition ever intended keeping the agreement.

I indicated at my meeting with Dr Lewin that funds may become available through funding rounds associated with the \$30m increase by this Government. I stressed at this time that all funding would be allocated through an open and accountable process. Indeed, this has occurred. In fact, four individuals using this service have received adult lifestyle support packages totalling \$190,000 a year during funding rounds under this Government. Unfortunately, six adults whom the service has itself chosen to care for have yet to receive recurrent funds.

Unfortunately, there are more than 70 other people in the Caboolture and north coast region who have higher priorities than the six people receiving support from this service. While I share the

distress that this must cause families, I will not pervert the funding process and allow people to jump the queue for funding. That would be unfair to the thousands of Queenslanders who are patiently waiting for support.

However, through the actions of the former Government this service has been placed in a difficult situation. Disability Services Queensland is working closely with Dr Lewin and the service to find a solution until long-term recurrent funding becomes available, as it has done with this service over the past two years. For the record, the Care Independent Living Association receives almost \$240,000 in recurrent funds from Disability Services Queensland. That includes funding for five respite beds, at approximately \$50,000 a year, and four lifestyle support packages, totalling almost \$190,000 a year. The Beattie Government has also provided \$36,000 for a bus and equipment. I understand that this may not be enough, but it is \$226,000 more than they received under the coalition, despite the hollow and false promises of my predecessors.

I say again to all the Queenslanders and their families who are waiting for support: this Government is committed to a fair and transparent funding process and we will not fund on a whim or as a result of political pressure. I say to the 70 individuals and their families in the Caboolture and north coast area with a higher priority that I will not ignore their needs in spite of the joint efforts of the honourable member for Indooroopilly and the member for Caboolture to have others jump the queue ahead of them. I will not make false promises. Disability Services Queensland will continue to fund on the basis of the highest need. I pay tribute to all those families and services supporting Queenslanders with a disability for the heroic work that they do.

This Government, in partnership with the disability sector, has embarked on a massive reform process with a record injection of \$30m in recurrent funding to start addressing this need. Together we are rebuilding a starved system. We will continue that process. I restate my commitment and the commitment of this Government to continue to address that need and to improve the lives of people with a disability in Queensland.
