



Speech by

**JEFF SEENEY**

**MEMBER FOR CALLIDE**

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Hansard 17 May 2001

#### **UNITING CARE**

**Mr SEENEY** (Callide—NPA) (11.34 p.m.): I rise tonight to bring to the attention of this parliament a situation that has been brought to my attention by the Barambah Uniting Church and more specifically by the Murgon Goomeri church council located in the South Burnett, within my electorate.

Uniting Care is a care provider run by the Uniting Church. They have advised me that the Murgon Goomeri church council has an ongoing dispute with the state government over funding levels. Inadequate funding from the state government has forced Uniting Care to seriously reduce its support to people with disabilities when the need for those services is ever increasing. It has even negotiated to somehow pay staff less than their full entitlements in a desperate attempt to maintain the care levels for the people dependent on their services.

This is, of course, a part of the chronic underfunding of disability services that is afflicting all service providers operating in Queensland. I have been provided with a copy of a letter written by the director of Uniting Care Queensland and I want to quote from that letter. That letter states—

Official government reports make it clear that the Queensland Government provides funds for non-government community accommodation and care places at a rate which is only 56% of the national average. We are also aware that the gap between the cost to government of directly providing accommodation places and the cost to government of funding non-government organisations to provide places is greater in Queensland than in any other State. If the Queensland government had to take on the delivery of accommodation services currently provided by the community sector, the cost to government would be an extra \$45,000 per place.

Uniting Care claims that the most effective solution to the chronic underfunding situation of the state government is by increasing the subsidy level to non-government organisations.

The complexity of the issues and the devotion demanded by anyone caring for disabled or disadvantaged people is beyond the understanding of most of us. I urge this parliament tonight to think carefully about the points that have been made by Uniting Care and I know that their concerns are shared by every other care provider working in the area of disability services.

I urge the minister responsible for disability services especially to do all that is possible to address the chronic underfunding situation that is affecting every organisation throughout the state. I further urge the minister to give serious consideration to the suggestions of Uniting Care and the Murgon Goomeri church council as a way of effectively addressing this problem. These people and their colleagues throughout the state are not asking for a benefit to them alone, they are asking on behalf of people who are dependent on the care they provide. They should have the support of every member of this parliament in that admirable endeavour.

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