



Speech by

**Mr N. ROBERTS**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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Hansard 16 October 2001

### **WORK'N'PLACE PROJECT**

**Mr NEIL ROBERTS** (Nudgee—ALP) (7.07 p.m.): On 30 August I had the honour of launching a very important jobs project, the Work'n'Place project currently operating within Brisbane. Over 20 weeks this project will give 15 long-term unemployed people paid work and on-the-job experience. The Work'n'Place project is just one of hundreds that the Beattie government has created to help break the cycle of unemployment, but this project stands out because the participants face not only unemployment but also the challenge of a disability.

The Work'n'Place project is being coordinated by the Mental Health Association and the long-term unemployed people who are participating in it have a psychological disability. Mental illness is not often understood by the community in general. That means that something like a one-off and relatively short period of depression, for example, has the potential to turn into weeks, months or even years of unemployment. The erosion of hope and confidence that occurs can help to create an ongoing cycle of unemployment.

Participants in this project include people with many and varied talents and until now common prejudices about mental health have denied them the opportunity to participate in the open employment market. This project is as much about addressing the barriers faced by competent people with mental illness as it is about improving the skills of the participants. The Work'n'Place project is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness in the wider community of the valuable contribution that people with mental illness can make to our society.

I congratulate the Mental Health Association on initiating this project, which the state government has been pleased to support with a grant of \$164,900. The Work'n'Place project will give the 15 participants skills in office administration, including database entry, telephone reception and filing. They will develop these skills working for a number of organisations, including palliative care, Relationships Australia, the Brisbane City Council, the Pine Rivers Shire Council, the Sandgate and Bracken Ridge Action Group, or SandBAG, the Queensland Council of Social Services, Brisbane Youth Services and the Stroke Association of Queensland.

Two of the participants have already worked for the Mental Health Association in helping to organise Mental Health Week, which was held last October, and have developed desktop publishing skills in working on the association's newsletter and magazine. The Work'n'Place project is a wonderful example of the success of the Beattie government's Breaking the Unemployment Cycle initiative.

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