



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 30 October 2001

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Alternative Dispute Resolution

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Justice) (10.09 a.m.), by leave: I am pleased to inform the House of an important development in the delivery of justice, which is allowing more and more Queenslanders to maintain ownership of their dispute and to save time and money. Our government's support for the alternative dispute resolution—or mediation process—is helping people settle disputes without going to court.

I am pleased to advise members that the number of mediations conducted in the past financial year almost doubled, with an exceptionally high success rate. More than 2,300 mediations were an increase of over 70 per cent over the 1,278 mediations conducted in the year 1999-2000. Between 80 per cent and 90 per cent of non-court mediations reach agreement and because the parties work out the settlement themselves, their commitment to that solution is usually strong.

An important factor in this growth and success has been the introduction of an innovative process called abbreviated mediation to the Small Claims Tribunal and minor debts court. Magistrates and court staff have strongly supported this initiative and report positive outcomes, such as client satisfaction and workload reduction for the courts.

Mediation services for Queensland are provided through six dispute resolution centres located in Brisbane, Wide Bay, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, and Cairns. A wide range of disputes are suitable for mediation, including neighbourhood disputes, workplace disputes, commercial matters, family conflict, large public interest disputes and facilitations for management committees and social clubs. The mediation process provides an invaluable preventative measure for disputing parties. Mediators act as a neutral third party and guide parties through a structured mediation process. The people in dispute discuss their differences and sort out a solution that suits them both—a win-win outcome. Whatever the criteria used—the number of mediation sessions, the percentage of agreements reached or compliance with those agreements—there is no question that this process is making a strong contribution to the delivery of justice throughout our state. The mediation process is undoubtedly successful in resolving a wide range of disputes speedily and inexpensively.
