



Speech by

STUART COPELAND

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

Hansard 3 May 2001

INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED CITIZENS

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.25 a.m.): The issue of deinstitutionalisation of people with severe intellectual disabilities has been publicly highlighted this week by a young woman at Chelmer who is living next door to three intellectually disabled men under 24-hour care. She is considering selling up after complaining of constant excessive noise and disturbance.

Obviously, this is an extremely sensitive issue and one that most people are unwilling to raise for fear of being labelled as discriminatory. However, this is not an isolated case, and I am sure that most members would have had similar instances raised in their own electorates.

Let me make it very clear that I agree that deinstitutionalisation is a viable and rewarding option for many people with disabilities which can enhance their lifestyle. However, this is certainly not the case for everyone. The excellent care of the type provided at the Basil Stafford Centre is still a necessity in our community. In fact, the mother of one of the residents at Chelmer was quoted on ABC Radio this morning as saying that her son was indeed very happy at the Basil Stafford Centre and that he had been moved from several rental arrangements since that time.

Anyone who is housed in the community should be given continuity of care and should abide by good neighbour principles. This will ensure that, if community integration is to be pursued as the best option, integration is successful. This should include improved consultations with neighbours before residential care arrangements are made and adequate supervision offering the best possible care for residents themselves.

This is a very sensitive issue and one that takes great courage to speak out on, as this resident has done. It is not an issue of discrimination but one that highlights that one policy size simply does not fit all. We must try to enhance the quality of life for people with disabilities, but we cannot ignore the quality of life of others in the community.
