



Speech by

**CHRISTINE SMITH**

**MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH**

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Hansard 19 August 2003

#### **DISABILITY ACTION WEEK**

**Mrs SMITH** (Burleigh—ALP) (10.58 p.m.): I would like to congratulate two people in my electorate who have been making a significant contribution to the community. Recently I was honoured to attend the official Disability Action Week awards. My esteemed colleague the Minister for Disability Services, Judy Spence, presented awards to people who had made a difference to the lives of those living with disabilities, and there were some terrific stories. The Disability Action Week awards give recognition to many who do extraordinary work and they top off a week of activities and events designed to raise the profile of people living with a disability and the many successes they enjoy.

There is also an emphasis on the efforts of those who work with people with a disability. It is heartening to find out how many people are concerned with improving the lives of others. Two of the winners were teachers in the Special Education Unit at Miami State High School. I have spoken before of the wonderful work done at the Special Education Unit and I am pleased to have the opportunity to do so again.

Teachers Andrew Shepherd and Jonathon Locke are making a real difference for students with special needs. Andrew and Jonathon were jointly nominated as individuals rather than as a group within the one nomination as they operate different programs in the fields of mechanics and community readiness training. The programs, while having separate goals, collectively provide students with work readiness, lifelong learning, retention at school and entry into full-time employment upon exit from school. The teachers' efforts and personal commitment have resulted in students staying at school until they are equipped to secure full-time employment. Most importantly, they have raised the status of their students within the community to such an extent that the SEU is actively approached for student placements. Andrew and Jonathon are highly committed teachers who devote many out-of-school hours to making links with the wider community. They have received strong praise from many quarters for demonstrating excellence in teaching.

There can be few professions more challenging than educating young people with special needs. That these two men are able to succeed so spectacularly speaks well not only of their own abilities but also of the school itself, the wider community and Education Queensland. I have some experience of the wonderful school community at Miami State High School and the Special Education Unit. The staff are totally committed to the school and its students and many families are actively promoting the SEU and campaigning on its behalf for a better deal for these special students. I am proud to be associated with them. I offer both Andrew and Jonathon my sincere congratulations.