



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 9 September 2003

**SENIOR SERGEANT P. IRWIN; DISABILITY SERVICES**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (12.24 p.m.): I rise to address the House on the loss of Senior Sergeant Perry Irwin who, until a short while ago, was the resident police officer in charge at Yarraman, virtually in the heart of the Nanango electorate. Over the years, I had the pleasure of meeting Perry Irwin on several occasions. During these few short meetings I came to like and have respect for this courageous man. This same respect held for him by his police colleagues needs no mention as his transfer and promotion to other districts as senior sergeant in charge was a very popular one.

Policing in today's climate of selfishness, drugs, robbery and terrorism is not an easy one. Yet hundreds of well educated young people line up to join the force despite all the negative sides of the job. It takes a special person to do such a job and Perry Irwin was one of them. No words would be sufficiently adequate to express the loss to his family and the community he served. Perry and I had met a few times, more often than not on the side of the road late at night as we both went about our duties. Perry epitomised all that was good in being a policeman. He policed the community through respect for it. He became a valuable partner in it and a friend who imparted the law as a friend.

I was sorry I could not be there to show my respects to Melissa and the kids, but the death of my father prevented me. Nothing fills the hole left by Perry's last patrol, but all the support, care and love Perry gave those in the communities he supported will, I am sure, be given to the family to help them through this most difficult of times.

At this time I would also like to offer my condolences to the member for Surfers Paradise on the loss of his mother recently.

I will now turn to an issue that I have been trying to raise for some time. The case being presented today concerns a family and their son who is a residential client of Disability Services Queensland. This client resides in a specially modified facility in Ipswich. The property is owned by Disability Services and was bought for the sole purpose of housing this client. This has been before the minister on several occasions. There have been serious allegations of misconduct and intimidating practices towards the family who are advocating on the client's behalf for appropriate services.

According to the family, the minister has failed to follow through on most of the family's concerns. The client in question is now 19 years of age. He became a client at the age of 12. He is severely brain damaged as a result of viral encephalitis at the age of five. He has Lennox Gastaut Syndrome, a severe form of epilepsy, which is not properly controlled by medication. He has, among many other serious problems, complex behaviour from this damage that needs to be very carefully considered and managed. He requires 24-hour supervision by trained staff.

It is alleged that attempts are currently being made by the DSQ, with the full knowledge of the minister's office, to cover up incidents of possible illegal and highly unethical conduct by the previous area manager and regional manager. Documents providing conclusive proof of misconduct raised in previous letters to the minister have been located. These documents, however, are now being withheld. Other documents that have been missing for several years and which relate to issues of serious concern while the client was temporarily housed at the centre have also been located and withheld. These documents are confidential and mysteriously went missing several years after the family asked to see them. They were found only recently when DSQ was informed that the matter would be pursued publicly.

It is alleged that the person assigned to the task of recovering and cleaning these documents is the same person who was the regional director at the time these incidents occurred and has a personal interest in making sure that no unsavoury information comes out regarding this particular case. One of the allegations is that deception was used to try to relocate the client to a private institution being built for the innovative housing scheme. A sum of \$100,000 was estimated for services going to this new facility. Currently, these services do not exist and are not as yet even in the planning for this project. This was confirmed by an assistant director-general only six to eight weeks ago.

The minister knew the family had been made this offer and must have known that this was perhaps an improper and false action by the regional director and area manager but did not question its accuracy. She did not at any time inform the family that the services for which this funding was intended did not and still do not exist. The minister encouraged the family to proceed with negotiations on this matter of the offer. The family became suspicious of the offer when questions about the services created a defensive reaction from the DSQ and answers were quite obviously evasive or rehearsed. I table the concerns of the mother.

Time expired.