



Speech by

Hon. JUDY SPENCE

MEMBER FOR MOUNT GRAVATT

Hansard 13 November 2003

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Respite Services

Hon. J. C. SPENCE (Mount Gravatt—ALP) (Minister for Families and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Minister for Disability Services and Minister for Seniors) (10.11 a.m.): Mr Speaker—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms SPENCE: This is a very important announcement for people with disabilities in this state.

Mr Johnson: Put a bit of heart into it, now, Jude.

Mr Schwarten: It's something you haven't got.

Mr Johnson: I haven't got a face like a twisted sandshoe.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The member for Gregory!

Ms SPENCE: They are particularly badly behaved today, aren't they, Mr Speaker?

It does give me great pleasure today to announce that I have approved the allocation of additional funding for respite services. A sum of \$1.38 million has been allocated to 30 respite services around this state to enable them to increase the hours of respite they are able to provide. This funding will provide support to up to 300 individuals and families.

With Christmas school holidays starting in less than a month, it is vital that parents and carers of people with disabilities have an appropriate amount of support in place to assist them throughout this period. That is why I made the decision to make this funding available from 1 December. This will mean that there will be an increased availability of respite before Christmas and throughout January. This additional respite support will range from in-home, host families, in-respite houses or within communities.

Respite services play a critical role in keeping families together by providing short-term breaks for families and carers. While respite services provide a well-deserved break for families and carers, they also boost the quality of life for people with a disability by giving them the opportunity to participate in new activities and develop new friendships.

The extra \$1.38 million for respite services is part of an additional \$290.5 million in state funding that this government is injecting into the disability sector over the next four years. Future Directions for Disability Services, released in conjunction with this year's budget, details the allocation of this year's funding and outlines a program of key reforms to improve disability services and support.

Families are at the forefront of this government's reform agenda for disability services. In the last three years the Beattie government has provided funding for 31 new and enhanced respite services and family support services across the state, providing support for an additional 1,000 individuals and families. We are determined to provide a better deal for people with a disability, their families and carers.

The 2003 report of government services acknowledges this government's commitment to improving support to people with disabilities and their families. The report showed that in 2000-01 and 2001-02 expenditure on respite services increased by 23.2 per cent in Queensland, compared with a national increase of 3.2 per cent. Under this government, respite and family support have increased at a rate seven times above the national average. We currently spend \$21 million a year on providing respite services. As Minister for Disability Services I know the difference this funding makes to the lives

of people with disabilities and their families. Today's announcement is good news for the disability sector and proof that the Beattie government is serious about improving the lives of Queenslanders with a disability.