



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 24 November 2004

DISABILITY SERVICES; ENDEAVOUR FUNDING

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (5.42 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. This issue strikes at the very heart of a government responsibility—that is, its duty to provide for the needs of Queensland's most vulnerable citizens. Intellectually disabled people and the loved ones who care for them have the same basic rights and needs as the rest of us. It is time this government realised that. I for one will not stand by and allow this government to trivialise the rights of our most vulnerable citizens.

For too long the Beattie government has shunted the care of disabled clients onto non-government organisations, abusing the goodwill of these organisations and forcing them into unsustainable financial positions. The Endeavour Foundation currently has 15 unfunded services—11 residential and four day services—catering for the needs of 120 intellectually disabled clients. Endeavour has absorbed the government's responsibility for many years and funded these services out of goodwill.

A recent appeal by Endeavour for \$3.1 million to maintain these services was refused by the minister. Up to 120 intellectually disabled clients now face uncertainty and upheaval. The demise of these services, the displacement of these individuals and the heartache that it has caused their families is now on the conscience of every single member of the Beattie government.

The minister has attempted to pacify these families by assuring them that affected individuals will be provided with alternative placements. If the minister took off his rose-coloured glasses for a moment he would notice that these services have remained unfunded for many years because of the critical shortage of placements and funding in the disability sector. I am asking the minister to come forward and identify the supposed surplus of alternative placements that he has been referring to because all that I can find is a growing level of unmet need.

The Premier has recently been gloating all over Queensland about the size of his supposed budget surplus. At the same time that the Premier was wallowing in his positive budget figures, Endeavour was denied funding for its unfunded services. Perhaps the Premier could hear the cries for help above the self-congratulations and backslapping that was going on in the Labor Party.

I call on the minister to now face up to his responsibility both as a minister and a decent human being. The minister's stop-gap solutions are not real alternatives for the individuals affected or their families. These individuals are now losing their homes, their house mates, their daily routine and, in some cases, their jobs. They have been robbed of any choice about their future accommodation and lifestyle options. Every member who sits opposite tonight has been complacent when it comes to the plight of those families who are sitting in the public gallery.

The Productivity Commission estimates that the cost of government provided care is approximately \$90,000 per placement.

Mr Livingstone: What percentage of funding did they get under a National Party government?

Mr KNUTH: They are up in the public gallery. The member should tell them that. The same report also estimates that the cost for non-government provided care is approximately \$38,000 per placement. In

the face of these figures, the minister must acknowledge the financial lunacy of this decision. Instead, the minister has opted against funding Endeavour despite the obvious savings that it would deliver to government. I call on the minister to urgently allocate funding to Endeavour to ensure that these essential services can continue.