



Speech by

Hon. Warren Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 15 February 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Respite for Older Carers

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors) (10.17 am): The Queensland government has strengthened its commitment to supporting older carers of adult children with a disability, allocating \$13.1 million for extra respite services. I have now signed the bilateral agreement on the older parent carers respite initiative, and now await the signature of the federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, to formalise the deal.

This is an ideal opportunity for the new minister to demonstrate his commitment to carers of Queenslanders with a disability. It will be a test to see if he has more compassion than his predecessor, who opposed conditions in the agreement which recognise the particular needs of Indigenous Queenslanders.

The agreement recognises older parent carers as an issue of growing concern as the general population ages. This bilateral agreement will go a long way to ensuring that Queensland carers receive additional support as they age, enabling them to continue their invaluable parenting role. With matching Commonwealth funds, Queensland will have \$26.2 million available to provide much needed relief for older carers who have spent a lifetime looking after their sons and daughters with disabilities.

The bilateral agreement comes under the provisions of the Commonwealth State Territory Disability Agreement and will have effect until the current agreement expires in June 2007. Priority will be placed on the following three areas: up to four weeks or more respite to parent carers aged 70 years and over or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers aged 50 years and over; up to two weeks or more respite to parent carers aged between 65 and 69 years inclusive or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers aged between 45 and 49 years inclusive who require hospitalisation; and other CSTDA services that have a respite effect, including services which enable the older carer to continue in their caring role.

The Queensland government is responding to the particular needs of parents who continue to care for their sons and daughters with a disability. The Queensland government's commitment to improving disability services is beyond doubt. To put this commitment into perspective, the 2005-06 operational budget for Disability Services Queensland of \$520.4 million is an increase of \$137.1 million since 2003-04.

In the past three state budgets we have directed funding to respite services that support and strengthen families including ageing carers. The Queensland government has also expanded the family support program to include families caring for an adult family member in their home and has initiated the Carer Recognition Policy to acknowledge the vital role that carers play. Work is continuing across Queensland government agencies in consultation with key stakeholders to develop strategies under the Carer Recognition Policy, and this will make a very real difference to older carers.