



Speech by

Hon. Warren Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 11 October 2006

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Department of Communities

Hon. FW PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Disability Services, Seniors and Youth) (10.21 am): Following the state election, the government announced its intention to streamline Queensland Health, strengthen community services and provide greater policy capacity and impetus to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. The new administrative arrangements have resulted in the transfer of former department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy functions to the Department of Communities. In addition, the following functions of Queensland Health have been identified to be transferred to the Department of Communities: residential aged care; home and community care; mental health strategy, policy and legislation; and non-government sector contract administration.

The community expects that government services will be delivered in the most effective, integrated and coordinated way to maximise benefits for community members who use those services. The Department of Communities and Queensland Health each have a strong client focus and service delivery role for individuals and for communities. In many cases they share the same client groups, for example supported accommodation, respite care and home and community care clients such as the elderly and people with a disability.

The integration of mental health strategy and policy within the Department of Communities provides opportunities to deliver benefits for clients. The greatest potential lies in the implementation of more coordinated and integrated early intervention and prevention programs that support access to a range of services that promote people's mental health and minimise the impact of mental illness on the person and their family and carers. There is also the potential to achieve better service integration for people with a dual diagnosis; that is, they have both an intellectual disability and a mental illness.

A change like this takes time, and it is important to take the time to get it right. Options on the best way to integrate the new functions within the Department of Communities will be developed based on evidence. The government is committed to a smooth transition to ensure clients and staff experience minimal, if any, disruption. It is expected that the transition of those elements of Queensland Health transferring to the Department of Communities should be completed by 30 June 2007.