



Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 7 August 2007

COMMUNITY SERVICES BILL

Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (4.15 pm): The new Community Services Bill 2007 will replace the outdated Family Services Act. This new legislation will apply to all non-government organisations who receive funding and other assistance from the Department of Communities. I would like to place on the public record the commitment of the minister for communities, the Hon. Warren Pitt, his dedication to his portfolio and the strong relationship that he has fostered with both the community sector and the disability sector over the years as minister. I also understand that a lengthy consultation period occurred with the community sector as part of the process in the preparation of this bill from August until October 2005 and that the views of the community sector have been incorporated into the bill before the House.

Non-government organisations provide a backbone to our local community. Many of the workers in my community go beyond the call of duty with many working on the weekends and after hours to help families and especially those families in need. The non-government organisations provide a range of services from neighbourhood centres, community safety services, support for seniors, young people, homeless people, as well as domestic and family violence prevention. The electorate of Inala is home to many organisations that help those in need or those people who simply need to meet up once a month such as to attend a seniors meeting. I would like to take this opportunity to mention a few here today.

The Inala Community House encompasses a network of activities centring on community support. It provides newly arrived migrants with support. In addition, it provides child care, after-hours school care, assistance for the Community for Children's initiative and the administration of the Inala Community Chest. I would like to thank Michelle Meredith who does a brilliant job at Inala Community House and I place on record my appreciation and thanks to her.

The Hub Neighbourhood Centre run by Karen Moore provides a centre for all ages in the area, running social lunches, young mothers' clubs, trivia nights as well as seniors outings. Mission Australia in the Inala electorate partners with Griffith University in providing the highly successful Pathways to Prevention Program. The Australian Red Cross has recently moved to Inala, helping to train newly arrived migrants in job assistance. The minister for employment and industrial relations recently awarded \$32,000 to assist in that program. St Vincent de Paul works tirelessly helping families with food and accommodation needs. The Salvation Army recently opened up an over 60s club called Alani over 60s. I would like to thank Ethel Murray who approached my office in relation to setting up this very worthwhile organisation. As members can appreciate, with socialisation becoming a big issue in communities, it is very important for the senior members of our communities to actually meet together and foster communication.

This legislation recognises the valuable role that community organisations play in our communities across Queensland. I would also like to make mention that this month a new domestic violence service centre will open up in Inala in Carole Park to provide support and assistance to those women and children who are victims of domestic violence. I would like to express my appreciation to the minister for housing, Robert Schwarten, and the minister for communities, Warren Pitt, for together making the money available for this very worthwhile and much needed centre in the Inala electorate. Between the two ministers, \$500,000 has been allocated for this very, very important initiative.

This bill recognises that as our modern world changes organisations also need to respond to change. The bill provides a contemporary legal basis for the Department of Communities to give assistance to community organisations. One of the important elements of the bill is in relation to standards. Part 2 of the bill enables the minister to make standards for the provision of community services for improving the quality of community services provided by funded service providers.

All community organisations will be very clear about what standards they will now need to meet. The bill also provides a mechanism for those organisations that face serious concerns about their service delivery. Although this does not happen on a regular basis, provision has been made to deal with funded organisations that cannot and will not meet their obligations under the act. The bill provides a range of mechanisms that can be utilised such as issuing a compliance notice or issuing a show-cause notice or even recovering unspent or misused funds or requiring relevant information or documents to be produced. There is a range of measures that enable the funds to be directed to where they are needed most.

The minister stated in this second reading speech that most Queenslanders will use community services in one form or another at some stage in their lives. To assist the delivery of these vital services the Department of Communities currently provides funding to approximately 860 community organisations. In addition, the minister added that funding provided by the Department of Communities to these organisations ranged from hundreds of dollars to more than \$2 million. In 2005-06 the department's investment in community organisations totalled more than \$150 million. The principles of this new bill will enhance the community's capacity to be cohesive, inclusive, active, resilient and adaptable. With those words, I commend the bill to the House.