



Speech by

Rachel Nolan

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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DISABILITY SERVICES

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (11.45 am): Last week in Rockhampton I met a lovely woman called Coral Creek. For nearly all her life Coral has helped her mother, who is now 85, to care for Gordon, her 56-year-old profoundly disabled brother. As we chatted over lunch Coral introduced me to her husband to whom she has been married for just two years. She told me that, with Gordon having recently secured a place in a Disability Services Queensland supported house, her mother was about to get a rest and she and her husband were heading off in their caravan. Coral's story is a beautiful one. It was a pleasure to meet her and, to me, her story spoke of the fundamental change in people's lives that good support for people with disabilities can provide.

When Labor came to office in 1998, disability services had been sadly neglected. In 1998-99, the Commonwealth provided just \$64 million a year in disability funding while the state contributed \$155 million. The advent of the then Beattie Labor government brought disability services clearly into the light. As shadow minister the now Premier, Anna Bligh, worked closely with the disability sector, listening to the needs of the unmet needs campaign, making commitments to increase funding for disability services and for the first time establishing a stand-alone department. The commitments made were supported enthusiastically by my predecessor, the then Treasurer and member for Ipswich, David Hamill.

Those commitments have been met. This year, state funding for disability services has increased to \$589 million as part of a total DSQ budget, including HACC and Commonwealth funding, of \$1.08 billion. Notably, state funding for disability services has increased 3.8 times since 1998, while the Commonwealth's share has not even doubled. It is that massive increase in funding that has touched the lives of thousands of Queenslanders, that is giving Coral Creek's brother a safe and secure place in which to live and which is giving her, for the first time, a taste of freedom.

Good disability services, however, are not just about the money. Nearly 10 years on from the establishment of Disability Services Queensland it is also timely that we look seriously at how we can work better with people with disabilities and with the community to provide services in smarter ways. With that in mind, the previous Minister for Disability Services, the very compassionate Warren Pitt, initiated Shared Visions disability conferences. The conferences, held at the Gold Coast in 2005 and 2006, each brought together around 500 people to exchange good ideas and develop a shared vision for a better future for people with disabilities, their carers and their families. The issues discussed included how we continue to make our communities accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities, how the government works genuinely in partnership with the disability sector and how we use the amazing technology available today to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. The Shared Visions conferences addressed the hard issues and at the same time engendered a great feeling of cooperation among those who attended.

Building on that success, the previous minister decided that it was not right that regional Queenslanders should be excluded from the discussion. So this year he took Shared Visions to the regions. Last month when Lindy Nelson-Carr became disability minister and I her parliamentary secretary, the program of 11 regional Shared Visions conferences was underway, and we jumped into it. Together the minister and I attended the Sunshine Coast forum just days after we were both sworn in. Since then I have been to forums in Toowoomba, Hervey Bay and Rockhampton. Appropriately, on 23 October the Shared

Visions conference in Ipswich will be the last of the 11 forums and I, perhaps with a degree of parochialism, am confident that it will be the best.

The Shared Visions forums are amazing events that demonstrate the best of the human spirit that is so evident in disability services and draw on the community's good ideas. In recent weeks it has been a pleasure to travel the state to spend time with people with disabilities and their wonderful advocates and carers, and to hear what it is that those people have to say. Minister Nelson-Carr and I look forward to working closely with the disability sector in the years ahead.