



Speech by

## Hon. Rod Welford

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Wednesday, 17 October 2007

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### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Auslan

**Hon. RJ WELFORD** (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (9.51 am): I am pleased to inform the House of the introduction of Auslan as the language for deaf students in Queensland schools. The introduction of Auslan into Queensland schools means that hundreds of deaf and hearing-impaired students across the state who require signed communication are now being better supported in their learning. In the 2007-08 budget, our government committed \$30 million over four years to implement the nationally recognised sign language, Auslan, in our schools. This financial year \$5.3 million will be allocated, including almost half a million dollars for non-state schools.

Today, it gives me much pleasure to report on the smooth transition to date in four education regions. Key staff have been appointed in the greater Brisbane, south coast, north Queensland and Sunshine Coast regions to assist with awareness raising, staffing, professional development in bilingual pedagogy and resourcing. Almost 30 teachers and teacher aides from these regions are now being sponsored to undertake the Auslan studies course at Griffith University via videoconferencing and face-to-face tutorials with native speakers. Approximately 100 others are studying short-term courses offered by deaf community organisations in the greater Brisbane, Sunshine Coast and Wide Bay-Burnett regions. Workshops on Auslan linguistics and the use of Auslan in the classroom are underway in Brisbane as well.

Our government has also provided \$30,000 for new resources, such as dictionaries, CD ROMs and DVDs in state schools. Within the next two months my department's project manager of the Disability Services support unit will visit the seven remaining education regions to work with regional staff as they determine their local needs for implementation next year.

We know some teachers are already using Auslan and their schools will transition quickly. These teachers will be encouraged to share their expertise with those who are just beginning the process. Children below school age are accessing Auslan support so that their transition into school is as smooth as it can be. While transition can be difficult, I have every confidence that the results we will see will far outweigh these temporary hurdles. It is expected that primary age children will enter secondary school with strong Auslan skills while secondary school students will be better equipped for tertiary studies, work situations and life as active members of the deaf community.

Today I pay tribute to Dr John Enchelmaier, the president, and members of the Queensland Deaf Society and thank them for providing each of us in the parliament with a history of the Queensland Deaf Society book as well as the *Handy Facts at Your Fingertips* brochure within which there is also an Auslan alphabet, which I will take some time to learn I am sure. We thank them for their assistance and information for us today and wish them well as they attend parliament this week.