



Speech by

Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 22 April 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Services

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.21 am): Earlier this month more than 450 participants from across Queensland attended Queensland's Disability Services two-day Shared Visions disability conference. At the conference Australia's longstanding leadership in upholding and safeguarding the rights of people with a disability was reinforced when we were one of the first to officially sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

A key priority of the Bligh government is our contribution to Australia's National Disability Agreement. That is why within the first week of being appointed as Minister for Disability Services I met with my federal counterpart, the Hon. Bill Shorten, to discuss the importance of developing a national agenda for the disability sector. We have a great opportunity for the Bligh government to work with the federal government to shape significant reforms across the country—one which particularly promotes early intervention strategies.

We identified our three key priorities as being: first, to lead national and state policy reforms which develop early intervention strategies, particularly for children aged between zero and six; secondly, to develop a system that is flexible enough to address pressures particularly on our ageing carers caring for children with a disability; and, thirdly, to assist younger people with a disability moving out of nursing homes.

The Bligh government as part of its Toward Q2 commitment has invested a record \$1.2 billion into the Disability Services portfolio in the past year—a 14 per cent increase from the previous year. Despite our achievements so far, I do recognise that more work needs to be done.

The significant reforms already being implemented by DSQ as part of the Growing Stronger initiative will help us meet some of the outstanding challenges, but more needs to be done. That is why I have made one of my first priorities to meet with the national disability services sector, advocacy groups and key stakeholders to identify the key challenges for Queensland. Early next month I plan to hold a ministerial round table forum with these groups to explore innovative approaches to focus on children with a disability.

However, behind my drive for reform is the commitment to take into account most fundamentally and importantly the rights of the individual to make choices, whether it be for accommodation, respite or disability services and, most importantly, to involve families and carers in that planning.