



Speech by

**Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

Hansard Wednesday, 20 May 2009

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Townsville, Disability Services**

**Hon. A PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.20 am): Last week I convened a ministerial round table with a focus on early intervention for children aged between zero and eight years. The round table was well represented by families and stakeholders from across the state, including The Umbrella Network, MontroseAccess, the Cerebral Palsy League, Butterfly Kids and AEIOU. The forum clearly identified the need for a single access point for support, information and advice for families to access both community and government services in their local communities. I am currently working on an action plan for children with a disability which will outline my priorities to enhance access to information, improve coordination of services and cater for needs in rural and remote areas across the state.

Last Friday I visited Townsville and announced \$90,000 for The Umbrella Network. It provides early intervention services for families with a child with a disability in the local area. These children with a disability may include children such as those having Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy or other physical disabilities. Angie and Jenny who run The Umbrella Network are part of gen Y: they are young, they are sassy and they are connected with families and the community through modern technologies. They have a contemporary way of doing business.

The other initiative I announced in Townsville is the trial of a child connect officer to be based in Townsville. The child connect officer will be employed by the department of disability services and will meet with families and provide early assistance for families once their child has been diagnosed with a disability. They will visit local child-care centres and kindergartens to identify and assist families with a child with a disability and to access information. We are going to trial these child connect officers over the next six months. This afternoon I will meet with the Hon. Bill Shorten, my federal counterpart, to discuss ways in which we can work together to nationally deliver early intervention strategies for children with a disability.