



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 5 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (8.43 pm): I rise to address the report of Estimates Committee D in relation to the Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs portfolio. I would like to officially acknowledge the committee and thank the chair, the member for Brisbane Central. A special thankyou goes to the members of my departmental staff and my ministerial staff.

In 2009-10 the disability services budget is \$1.4 billion—the third year in a row that it has exceeded \$1 billion. During the estimates hearing a number of issues were raised. These included: the cost of implementing recommendations of the Carter report; capital infrastructure investment; employment opportunities for people with mental illness; the Local Area Multicultural Partnership and Community Action for a Multicultural Society programs; and English language tutoring and interpreting services—just to name a few.

During the hearing I outlined my three key priorities which provide a focus for our policy development and service delivery. These are: early intervention strategies for children with a disability; better accommodation options for ageing carers; and helping younger people with a disability move out of aged-care facilities.

In relation to the third point, we are meeting our commitment to help younger people out of aged-care facilities through our partnership with the Commonwealth government. Under the \$48 million Younger People in Residential Aged Care Initiative, the Bligh government has not only met but exceeded the Commonwealth target by helping more than 80 younger people to find more age-appropriate accommodation since the program started on 1 July 2006.

I was very pleased during the hearing to point out that the member for Hinchinbrook has visited the Young Care facility. I am sure that all members will be pleased once the new Young Care apartments open on the Gold Coast which will be funded by the Bligh government's \$3 million election commitment. I would like to point out to the member for Coomera that land has been identified in his electorate and this is where the new accommodation will be built.

In the member for Hinchinbrook's statement of reservations he raised concerns about a number of issues which I would like to take the opportunity to briefly address. The member asked a very specific question regarding funds budgeted and funds spent within 2008-09. I provided him with very clear answers. However, judging from his reservation statement it seems as though he still has some uncertainties about more specifically what constitutes an underspend.

As I explained very clearly during the hearing, the variations the member referred to reflect a timing issue in relation to the rollout of funding for projects within the financial year. The member's interpretation of my explanation as 'just the usual deferral' was an oversimplification. Whether it was accidental or not is not for me to say. However, I will reiterate it for the member.

Administratively, this funding has been committed but deferred. This means that the services can and will be delivered in the 2009-10 financial year. Reasons behind the deferrals are not difficult to understand and can range from anything from unforeseen natural events, like floods, to extensions in

community consultations for design and planning—for example, around the all-abilities playgrounds or purchase of appropriate land for disability accommodation. This allows for necessary and appropriate planning to ensure we are meeting our commitments to programs and projects.

The member's statement of reservations also indicated he has some misunderstanding of the Bligh government's response to the Carter report. The Queensland government recognises the importance of the Carter report and responded with the Investing in Positive Futures initiative through my portfolio. Some \$113 million was allocated over four years, from 2007-08 to 2009-10, and the estimated budget for this initiative is \$53.13 million.

I note that the member recently raised the issue about the accommodation at Wacol. I can assure the member that every dollar that is committed to this initiative will be spent on that site. I am also happy to invite the member to come out to Wacol, which is also in my electorate, to have a look at the designs and the accommodation that we will be building and also to meet with some of the people with a disability who present with these challenging behaviours. I think he will appreciate the complexity of the problem and the reason that we have committed funding to this initiative.

In terms of multicultural affairs, the Bligh government has worked to promote cultural diversity and enhance community participation. To help meet this commitment we have invested almost \$6 million over three years for the Local Area Multicultural Partnership and Community Action for a Multicultural Society programs, which support 35 workers in local councils and community organisations.

In delivering fair and inclusive communities to our multicultural society, the Bligh government also recognises the importance of translator and English language assistance services. To meet this commitment the government has invested \$5.8 million in the NGOs to provide translators to any Queenslanders who needs them. The Bligh government has a vision for Queensland that supports fair and caring communities for all Queenslanders regardless of their ability, background or belief. I commend the report to the House.