



Speech by

Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Thursday, 17 September 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Lister, Ms L; Disability Services Act

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.04 am): On Friday, 4 September the Brisbane District Court found Susan Lister, a carer at Care Bribie on Bribie Island, guilty of deprivation of liberty and assault charges against two young boys with a disability. I welcome the guilty verdict found against Lister, because the care and safety of children and all people with a disability is the No. 1 priority for me as disability services minister.

Since the occurrences in Care Bribie, the Bligh government has implemented a range of mechanisms through the Disability Services Act 2006 to strengthen safeguards and protect people with a disability, and it is widely recognised that Queensland has the one of the strongest regimes in place in Australia. In 2002, in response to changes to the sector and the issues brought to light at Care Bribie, the Queensland government committed to review the Disability Services Act 1992 and other reform measures. In July 2004 the Disability Sector Quality System was introduced—one of the strongest in Australia—utilising independent certification and promoting quality and continuous improvement. Today, 239 funded non-government service providers are certified under the system, with a further 19 providers in the process of certification.

In May 2005 the Queensland government announced a package of reforms to strengthen and safeguard the rights of people with a disability, forming the basis of the Disability Services Act 2006. Under the act, the department established the complaints management system. This system, independently monitored by the Complaints Management Quality Committee, seeks to resolve complaints about departmentally provided or funded services, and allows for the appointment of authorised officers to investigate, monitor and enforce the act. Additionally, in resolving issues the department works with or refers matters to other agencies such as the Queensland police, the Crime and Misconduct Commission, and the Health Quality and Complaints Commission. For people accessing services not funded by the department, protections are in place under general law and other legislation—for example, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Act 2006. In addition, a number of existing bodies have investigative powers to protect people with a disability from abuse such as the Adult Guardian, who has the power to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation for adults with impaired capacity.

Last Friday I also supported a push at the ministerial council in Canberra for a national quality framework for disability services to ensure consistency across all states. This is just a brief overview of the stringent measures we have in place, but with any compliance system constant vigilance and review are needed to ensure that it is meeting the requirements of the whole sector, especially people with a disability and their families.