



Speech by  
**Curtis Pitt**

**MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE**

Hansard Wednesday, 7 October 2009

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## **BLUE SKIES**

**Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.03 pm): In Queensland there are around 180,000 people with moderate to severe disabilities. During Disability Action Week I met with Mark Henley of the Spinal Injuries Association to learn more about Blue Skies, a new blueprint that challenges all areas of our society to work together like never before to produce a better future for people with a disability. It can no longer be left to government; the broader community also has a role to play.

The Blue Skies vision calls for equality in education, urban planning and private construction and targeted assistance for different disabilities rather than one-size-fits-all funding. I was also pleased to hear that a national disability insurance scheme is back on the agenda. After all, it was mooted in the Whitlam era. Such a scheme would ensure funding for all people with disabilities, not unlike Medicare, and would help a lot of families that are doing it tough. I know that Minister Palaszczuk has called on the federal parliamentary secretary, Bill Shorten, to release the feasibility study as soon as possible so that we can contribute to the debate in a meaningful and constructive way. The Queensland government will use the Blue Skies vision as the foundation for its 10-year strategy to shape the future of disability services in delivering on the Toward Q2 ambition of fair and inclusive communities across Queensland. The realisation of the Blue Skies scenario cannot come soon enough.

I am proud to have some strong and active advocates for the disability sector in my electorate, such as Ian Chill, a member of the Disability Council of Queensland, who is contributing to the development and design of the \$448,000 all-abilities playground at Edmonton. The project is being managed by the Cairns Regional Council and is expected to commence after the wet season in 2010. I am also proud to have in my electorate the members of the Innisfail District Disability Awareness Group who provided input during the construction of the MaMu Rainforest Canopy Walkway to ensure that it met the needs of people with a variety of disabilities. As a result, all facilities and walking tracks are accessible for visitors with vision impairment and all except the top viewing deck of the observation tower are accessible for wheelchairs with assistance.

Blue Skies makes it clear that in order to develop a truly inclusive society the whole community must accept disability as a social issue and acknowledge the inherent rights of people with a disability as citizens. I support the Blue Skies vision in the strongest possible terms.