



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Wednesday, 14 April 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Autism

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.10 am): April is Autism Awareness Month. It is a chance to explore ways to further strengthen our support for the thousands of Queenslanders affected by autism. Every year, 350 Queensland children are diagnosed with autism. The Bligh government is more committed than ever to helping these Queenslanders via its Autism Early Intervention Initiative. We have already invested over \$4.4 million over the past two years, and we are providing a further \$2.4 million for the initiative in 2009-10. These funds will help Autism Queensland and AEIOU to deliver better educational and social outcomes for children with autism aged zero to six.

The initiative will see AEIOU establish new autism early intervention centres in Toowoomba, Townsville, Park Ridge, Bray Park and the Sunshine Coast. I am pleased to advise the House that new outreach services will be provided in Hervey Bay and Emerald. Autism Queensland is getting funds to establish early intervention services in Rockhampton. Last month I spoke to the House about our efforts to help double the capacity of the autism centre in Edmonton and provide outreach services to the cape. I have also had discussions with Autism Queensland about the need for an autism early intervention service for Mackay.

During this term of government, one of my key priorities is to make autism early intervention services available to more Queensland families right across the state. From Cairns to Coolangatta and inland, I want to ensure early intervention autism centres and outreach services can be accessed by more Queensland families. Our Autism Early Intervention Initiative is great news for hundreds of Queensland families who will be able to access specialist staff providing speech therapy, occupational therapy and physiotherapy.

On 29 August this year Queenslanders will get their chance to support people with autism by taking part in the Bridge to Brisbane fun run. Proceeds from every registration will go to Autism Queensland in support of its Kidstart outreach early intervention programs. I will be assembling a team of the fittest and bravest MPs to compete and raise money for this very worthy cause. I am quite sure we will see some members of the opposition participate as well.

Mr Watt interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Everton is coming. The member for Southport is coming. Is the shadow minister coming? I am quite sure I will get the member for Hinchinbrook there as well.

Mr Rickuss interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I will take all names, member for Lockyer. I want to encourage members of this House and other Queenslanders to put on their walking or running shoes and show their support for children with autism this August.