



Speech by

Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (12.20 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 place on record my thanks to all members of the committee, and particularly the chair, the member for Brisbane Central. I also give a special thankyou for all of the work from the parliamentary staff, my own departmental staff and, of course, the ministerial staff.

I think the estimates process is a very important process. It is one that allows the parliament to question ministers about detailed expenditure in relation to their portfolios. I will give credit where credit is due. The member for Hinchinbrook did ask questions related to both the capital budget and the allocation of resources for the Disability Services budget. As I said during the estimates hearing, this year we are contributing \$1.6 billion to improve and expand disability services and community care right across the state. This is record funding that the Labor government is very proud of and that we are delivering right across Queensland to ensure that people get the services they need. The budget includes \$1.054 billion for specialist disability services, \$528.7 million for home and community care and \$28.6 million for community mental health services.

In relation to new funding that was allocated this year, I want to mention a couple of things so that I can place them on the record of the House. There is \$4.4 million to support young people with a disability leaving school. That is very important. We want to ensure that more young people get opportunities when they leave a school environment to continue into employment or continue into more training opportunities. We are also delivering \$3.2 million to support people with spinal cord injuries. This is a very important initiative—one which the Labor government has started and one which we will continue to deliver. Disability can happen to anyone at any time. Time and time again we hear on the news about people, whether that be through road accidents or through sporting injuries, who end up with a spinal injury. We need to put funds into this program to ensure that people can leave the spinal injury unit at the PA Hospital and transition back into the community.

The member for Aspley spoke about autism. I am very pleased that we are able to deliver this initiative in both Bundaberg and Mackay. I went on a listening tour and met with families and different organisations in both of these regional areas. We are going to be delivering brand-new autism services for these regions in the very near future. Those services will also be matched with some capital funding. We are also in the process—within the next week—of opening a brand-new autism service on the Sunshine Coast. This will provide outreach to both Gympie and Hervey Bay. Once again, we are delivering. What did we hear from those on the other side of the House? Absolutely nothing about early intervention for children with a disability. Early intervention for children with a disability is one of our key priorities. We have launched an action plan and we will continue to listen and we will continue to deliver.

I want to address a couple of issues that the member for Hinchinbrook raised in his reservations. The first one is in relation to the capital budget. I cannot help it if the member for Hinchinbrook cannot

understand the capital statements that are provided as part of the budget process. He has failed to recognise that, of the two line items that he refers to, one is in relation to the master plan and one is in relation to the building of accommodation at the Wacol site. I explained this to him in detail at the time of the estimates hearing. It was a very thorough explanation. I outlined to him that all of the money that was allocated to these infrastructure projects is allocated and will be completed. It is a rolling program. Sometimes projects do not take just one or two years; they are rolled over. But they will be completed, as I mentioned during the estimates hearing.

The other issue he raised was about Meals on Wheels. There is some misinformation that is being spread by members of the opposition. Meals on Wheels in Queensland now has to comply with national food standards. These national food standards are set by the federal government. They are national food standards; they are not set by the state government. We are speaking with the Meals on Wheels organisations and we will continue to assist them to make sure they can comply with the new forms.

Finally, Multicultural Affairs was a great area of interest for the committee. We are delivering a new policy. We have forums right across the state that have happened, and by the end of this year we will have a brand-new multicultural policy for all of Queensland. Once again, I commend the report to the House and I thank all the committee members for their participation in this very worthwhile process.