



Speech by

Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 17 August 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Disability Services, Regional Queensland

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.25 am): Earlier this month I visited the University of the Sunshine Coast, where a new autism centre of excellence is being established. I was pleased to announce that the Bligh government will contribute \$450,000 a year to the AEIOU Foundation to help run the centre. The centre will support at least 25 local children with autism—15 at the centre itself and 10 via outreach.

This investment is another sign of the Bligh government's commitment to strengthening disability services in regional Queensland. We are working closely with the federal Labor government. I was joined by the federal minister, Jenny Macklin, when she committed \$1.8 million in capital funding to establish the centre.

When the centre is up and running next year, it will deliver group based developmental and educational programs, speech and occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. The centre will also deliver outreach services to the Fraser Coast and Central Highlands regions. By the end of next year, I would like to see autism early intervention centres up and running in Queensland's major coastal centres from Cairns to Coolangatta and providing outreach services to rural and remote Queensland.

Last month I announced a \$1 million funding boost for disability services in the south-west of the state. This is great news for south-west communities and it means that community groups from Ipswich to Quilpie can apply for a share of \$1 million in extra capital funding to upgrade facilities and equipment. This will help these organisations to deliver day and respite services for people with a disability.

Just last week I officially opened the new all-abilities playground in Mackay with the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland. This new playground will give children with and without a disability a chance to play together side by side. The Queensland government contributed \$283,000 to establish this playground, with the Mackay Regional Council contributing \$120,000. This is one of 16 all-abilities playgrounds that we are delivering with regional councils under a \$4.6 million program.

We will continue to invest in stronger disability services in the regions to ensure that more Queenslanders with a disability get the services that they need.