Speech by

Hon. Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Thursday, 2 September 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Baby Bridges Program

Hon. A PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs) (10.23 am): One of my top priorities is to provide early intervention programs to children with a disability. The Baby Bridges program offers children aged zero to five specialised play sessions to maximise sensory situations and learning capacity. It is designed to give children the best start in life. I have seen firsthand the way Baby Bridges is changing the lives of Queensland children. In July I visited the Horizon Foundation with the member for Capalaba, Michael Choi. It was great to see these children getting the support they need. The state government has provided Horizon with $30,000 to help run its Baby Bridges program.

The Baby Bridges program enables parents to take part in respite group activities which provide them with up-to-date information, advice on therapy services as well as opportunities to establish support networks with other parents. Parents have reported that the program has helped them to better understand their child's disability and support needs. But even more importantly, it is a huge benefit to the children themselves.

I am pleased today to announce an expansion of the Baby Bridges early intervention initiative. The state government will provide an extra $960,000 over the next three years to expand this program state-wide. It will go to 14 locations across the state. The expansion of the Baby Bridges program will benefit an extra 1,600 Queensland families. There is strong evidence that early intervention initiatives can help to change and transform the lives of these young people. Early intervention enables the best start in life. I am very pleased that this initiative will be expanded state-wide to benefit Queensland families. It will also help give these families the very best support they need, which means the very best start in life.