



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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**CARERS (RECOGNITION) AMENDMENT BILL; SENIORS
RECOGNITION (GRANDPARENTS PROVIDING CARE) BILL**

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (7.52 pm): I rise to put on the record my support for the Carers (Recognition) Amendment Bill 2010. Not only is there a diverse range of caring relationships in our community, but the caring role is spread across the whole community. During this cognate debate, other speakers have covered various aspects of the bill and other issues such as recognition of carers and grandparents by the Commonwealth and in other states; expanding membership of the Carers Advisory Council; how these amendments will benefit full-time grandparent carers; and of course the elements of the private member's bill, introduced by the member for Burdekin.

This evening I would like to particularly acknowledge carers in rural and regional Queensland and also Indigenous carers. Principle 11 of the Queensland Carers Charter states—and being from regional Queensland this seems to be an obvious statement but nonetheless true—

Remote and rurally based carers face additional difficulties caused by isolation.

We know that approximately 47 per cent of carers in Queensland live in rural areas. We also know that approximately six per cent of carers in Queensland are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. In the last financial year the Bligh government committed funds to recruit, train, assess and support foster and kinship carers who, as we know, can include grandparents caring for their grandchildren under kinship care arrangements. Of specific benefit to rural and remote foster and kinship carers, rural and remote allowances were provided to assist with additional costs incurred by foster and kinship carers residing outside metropolitan areas.

The Time for Grandparents initiative of the Office for Seniors in the Department of Communities has recently been extended to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents providing full-time care for their grandchildren. Under this program, respite and support for grandparents raising grandchildren is provided through the provision of grandfamily camps and recreational activities for grandchildren. These initiatives are just two examples of the way in which the government acknowledges the unique situation of carers in rural and regional areas of Queensland and Indigenous carers.

Carers Queensland has 12 offices across the state, from Cairns to the Gold Coast and west to Roma, and offers the most decentralised carers support of any one carers organisation in Australia. From this it is clear to see that Carers Queensland is for all carers—those in rural and regional areas and also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers. Carers Queensland has also very recently launched a most informative DVD aimed at Indigenous carers.

I wanted to mention that in the lead-up to the debate on these bills I was contacted by Mrs Janet Goessling on behalf of the Cairns and District Grandparents Support Group. Mrs Goessling acknowledged that both bills have some good points and were introduced with the best of intentions—which I do agree with—but she suggested that they did not go far enough. I want Mrs Goessling to rest assured that, firstly, I, along with all members of this House, recognise and value the important role that grandparents play in caring for and raising their grandchildren; and, secondly, that I did take her advice and I have very carefully

considered both bills. I would welcome an opportunity to meet with her and other representatives from the support group in the near future to discuss their concerns about what has not been picked up in the bill according to the support group. I thank the Cairns and District Grandparents Support Group for their ongoing advocacy and for taking the time to put pen to paper and letting me know their views.

In wrapping up, my congratulations to Ministers Palaszczuk, Struthers and Reeves and all departmental officers who have been involved in bringing together the Carers (Recognition) Amendment Bill. It gives much deserved recognition to grandparents providing full-time care for their grandchildren, and initiatives of this government are providing pragmatic assistance for them to undertake this important role.