



Speech by


Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 9 March 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

National Disability Insurance Scheme; Mental Health Services

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (10.04 am): The first stand-alone ministry for mental health could not have come at a better time for Queenslanders as we come to grips with the tragedy upon tragedy that has marked the start of 2011. I have seen the mental anguish on people's faces in the cyclone ravaged Cassowary Coast. For many people, mental trauma can be but a heartbeat away from mental illness. As a government, we need to reach out to people right now and wherever possible give them the support and services they need to turn their lives around.

I commend the federal government for putting a national disability insurance scheme on the table. We welcome the Productivity Commissions's draft report. This is an historic opportunity to bring about great change. I look forward to working with the federal Labor government so that together we get the best outcome for our community.

Ageing carers in particular need to know that when they are gone someone, somewhere will be able to look after their autistic son or daughter, their nephew, their niece, their friend. That is what the insurance scheme is all about. As the father of an almost two-year-old, I have had to use the phrases 'inside voice' and 'listening ears' a fair bit. In terms of our government's response, I plan to establish a working group of key stakeholders and I will certainly be putting on my listening ears so that we get our response right, so that we can put Queensland's case to Canberra and ensure people in our state get the best deal.

Gone are the days when governments simply locked the door and threw away the key. In a few months time, Queensland's first forensic mental health service will be open for business—a purpose-built secure facility at Wacol. There has long been a need for non-hospital based secure care for people with a cognitive or intellectual disability who are on forensic orders. Apart from post-construction modifications, the centre should be up and running by midyear. Its chief focus will be to provide services, counselling, rehabilitation and the right kind of care to clients to help them turn their lives around.

My focus as minister will be to break down the barriers around mental health—to remove the stigma, to engage with the community, business and industry and to say 'It's okay to be different.' Take the staff I met at WorkLink in Cairns. Their job is to encourage employers to take on someone with a mental illness. They know that when clients walk through their doors, it is because they want a hand up, not a handout. I commend Dorothy Dunne and her team for the work they are doing in the far north and I encourage others to follow their lead.

Everyone deserves a fair go. Everyone deserves a chance. Importantly, everyone deserves the chance to reach their potential.