




Speech by

Hon. Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard Wednesday, 3 August 2011

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: HEALTH AND DISABILITIES COMMITTEE

 **Hon. CW PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (Minister for Disability Services, Mental Health and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships) (6.01 pm): I rise to address the report of the estimates hearing into the Health and Disabilities Committee, which provides me with another opportunity to speak about the Bligh government's important and significant 2010-11 budget allocation for the disability services and mental health areas of my portfolio. Firstly, I congratulate and thank the committee members, particularly the chair and member for Mundingburra, and the departmental, parliamentary and ministerial staff for all the hard work that was put into this important and worthwhile annual process.

At the committee hearing a number of questions were asked in relation to the new Forensic Disability Service. The Forensic Disability Service is the first service of its kind in Queensland. It caters to adults with an intellectual or cognitive disability that are also on forensic orders but have no mental ill health issues requiring treatment. From the outset we have said that this facility is a start. It is a toe in the water to make sure that we get the model right. A review will be undertaken within two years and we will have a much better understanding of the demand for this service into the future and will be able to plan accordingly. I reiterate that individuals subject to forensic orders will benefit from different residential circumstances and we will be acting in the best interests of both those clients and the larger community. For example, the Mental Health Act 2000 now requires authorised mental health services to work under new guidelines to more appropriately support persons on a forensic disability order residing in those services.

I was pleased the member for Gladstone showed a keen interest in Home and Community Care funding. This year is the start of significant changes in the way that Home and Community Care services will be funded. From 2011-12, the Australian government will take funding responsibility for people 65 and over in the general population and Indigenous Australians who are aged 50 and over. The Australian government will also assume full policy and program responsibility for the basic community care services for older people from 2012-13. Queensland will assume funding and program responsibility for people under 65 years in the general population and Indigenous Australians who are under 50 years of age, in line with the National Disability Agreement. It is important to recognise that while these reforms represent changes to arrangements between governments, there will be no changes for clients and no changes to service delivery during 2011-12. Over time these changes will allow more streamlined service systems that will be simpler for clients to navigate.

This year represents another record budget for disability and community care services, with funds totalling \$1.775 billion. This represents a very substantial 10 per cent increase or an additional \$163 million, when compared with last year's budget of \$1.612 billion, which was in itself a record budget. As an even greater comparison, since 1998 in Queensland successive Labor governments have increased funding for disability services by more than 495 per cent. I remind those opposite that when the coalition was last in government in Queensland in 1997-98, it committed only \$125 million funding for

Queenslanders with a disability. Even in this extraordinarily tight fiscal environment, the Bligh government has again demonstrated our commitment to Queenslanders with a disability, their families and carers, and we will continue to work in close collaboration with the non-government service providers who support them.

I do not intend to address the statement of reservations point by point. However, any claim that the Bligh government is 'living for the moment rather than forward planning for Queensland's future' is astonishing. We are on the cusp of some of the most significant reforms in Australian history for people with a disability, their families and their carers, and those opposite have been almost silent. As I said earlier, we are facing national reform with regard to HACC and with regard to the possible implementation of a national disability insurance scheme. If implemented, the scheme would dramatically change the way disability services are currently provided throughout Australia. However, last year's estimates hearing was the last time an opposition spokesperson for this portfolio mentioned the NDIS. I have not had a single question from those opposite, during estimates or at any other time, about the NDIS, nor has there been any public comment about it. The LNP did not lodge a submission with the Productivity Commission following its draft report. What is the LNP's position on a national disability insurance scheme? Are they simply waiting to see what the public opinion is when the Productivity Commission's final report is released? When will they decide?

Our position is clear. The Bligh government has welcomed the Productivity Commission's draft report as an historic opportunity to improve the way disability care and support services are provided to people with a disability. In May the Queensland government lodged a whole-of-government submission with the Productivity Commission. We expressed our in-principle support for an NDIS and a national injury insurance scheme. Of course, greater investigation of the impacts of both schemes is required. We are focused on looking at the prospect of a greater level of certainty into the future. We are putting the finishing touches on a 10-year plan for enabling Queenslanders with a disability. I hope to release this plan a little later this year. There is no credibility to the LNP's assertion that we are not forward planning for Queensland's future. We are looking at generational change, but they have nothing to say. As we have seen in the past, the LNP is a policy-free zone in this area.