




Speech By
Steve Minnikin

MEMBER FOR CHATSWORTH

Record of Proceedings, 1 April 2014

**COMMUNITIES LEGISLATION (FUNDING RED TAPE REDUCTION)
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr MINNIKIN** (Chatsworth—LNP) (3.25 pm): I rise to make a small contribution to the Communities Legislation (Funding Red Tape Reduction) Amendment Bill. I would like to specifically concentrate on the safeguards for funding aspect of the bill before the House. The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services funds a range of community based entities to deliver services and products that are essential for maintaining the wellbeing of all vulnerable Queenslanders. These services are essential for preserving the wellbeing of people and their communities. In fact, in the 2012-13 financial year the department provided an estimated \$1.5 billion, which is about 60 per cent of its total expenditure, to not-for-profit organisations, local governments and other organisations to deliver child safety, disability and community services. In the vast majority of these cases, funded organisations use government funding as their model in good faith to provide the best possible services for care for Queenslanders in need. Like anything in life, though, from time to time serious concerns can arise. It is not always possible to resolve these cooperatively or under the organisation's funding contract.

Although rare, I am pleased to report, these situations can have serious consequences for individuals and communities. Quite rightly, both government and the community expect that publicly funded services are delivered in a safe, transparent and accountable way. Funding legislation gives the department clear legal powers to safeguard the delivery of critical services and ensure the proper use of its large investment of public funds. Protections offered by funding legislation have not been consistently available, however, across the department's funding lines. This is because funding legislation appears in some areas but not in others. For example, while specialist disability services are funded under the Disability Services Act 2006, some other departmentally funded services that clients with a disability might use are not. An example is community care services.

The Communities Legislation (Funding Red Tape Reduction) Amendment Bill 2014 makes consistent protections available for funding provided under the revised Community Services Act 2007. Under the bill, a minister will be able to declare the protections in the revised Community Services Act apply to particular funding streams. In deciding whether to declare funding, a minister will be able to consider a range of factors. These include, but are not limited to, the amount of funding the vulnerable service users are provided with and whether the funding is regulated in another way.

The bill's powers enable government to investigate serious concerns about performance of government funded entities and compel them to take specific remedial action when necessary. In worst case scenarios, the department can appoint an interim manager to the funded organisation that will use the funding to ensure the service is safely delivered to the community. These powers will be available where a funded entity misuses public funds, fails to deliver a funded service or product, harms a person or where the organisation is providing disability services. It breaches the protections

in the Disability Services Act 2006 such as yellow card employment screening requirements. To enable the department to take preventive action, the powers will be available if there is a serious risk of any of these things happening. As well as reducing red tape, the bill will make consistent safeguards available to ensure services are delivered safely and accountably.

Like many members in this hallowed chamber I, too, have had the privilege to be invited into the homes of many Chatsworth residents who have actually had people provide care under the minister's department. I would like to take this opportunity during this small contribution to acknowledge the efforts of all the carers and parents, not just in the Chatsworth electorate, but throughout the great state of Queensland. I take the opportunity as well to congratulate the minister. We talk here often about red tape as it pertains to economic bills, but this is red-tape reduction—very much the heart and soul of where it really matters and that is with people, not just with dollars. I particularly congratulate the minister on the efforts that she and her staff have taken in providing this bill for consideration before the House. On that note, this is a short contribution. I am very pleased to support the bill. Again, I congratulate the minister on her endeavours.