




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 14 June 2016

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Neighbourhood Centres

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence) (10.11 am): Neighbourhood centres are the backbone of our communities. I have been fortunate enough to visit many of our wonderful neighbourhood and community centres right across the state. Before I was elected I volunteered as the duty solicitor at my local neighbourhood centre in Beenleigh, so I know firsthand how vital neighbourhood centres are in local communities and what a real difference they make to the lives of local community members, particularly vulnerable individuals and families. Whether it is joining a playgroup or getting help with budgeting, parenting, counselling or literacy and numeracy, there are a range of services available conveniently under the one roof. Neighbourhood centres are an excellent example of how local issues are often best resolved with local solutions. Neighbourhood centres are also a key part of our efforts to address domestic and family violence, with support services available to people affected by this unacceptable form of violence at a local, familiar centre.

The Palaszczuk government believes that every Queenslanders deserves a chance to reach their full potential to participate equally in our economy and society, and that is why this morning I am delighted to announce that the 2016-17 state budget is delivering for some of our most vulnerable Queenslanders—and the places and the services that support them—with almost \$6.9 million over four years to go towards our neighbourhood centre investment strategy to better support communities right across Queensland. Three million dollars of this funding will be directed towards the employment of new Community Connect workers. These specialist workers will provide additional support to meet the needs of vulnerable people in Manoora, Darra, Lockyer Valley, Gympie, Eagleby, Nerang, Chinchilla, Blackall-Tambo, Upper Ross, Bowen, Monto and Mossman. These new Community Connect workers will be able to provide extra support for people with high needs so they will not miss out on the kinds of services they need. It also means that further support will be available to those people affected by domestic and family violence and other complex issues. It also means new jobs in these communities.

A further \$6.4 million in capital works funding has been committed this financial year to neighbourhood centre replacements and upgrades. This includes projects in Inala, East Murgon and Mackay. All in all, it means that Queensland's vital neighbourhood and community centres will be better resourced and better equipped. I am also thrilled that we are committing almost \$3 million over four years to top up the funding of each and every one of our community and neighbourhood centres to at least \$110,000 a year. For some centres like Cooktown, Healy near Mount Isa, Malanda, Pomona and Maleny, it means their funding will more than double this financial year.

One of the great things about our neighbourhood centres is that they always come together and share ideas. Unfortunately, in recent times that has been harder since the former LNP government cut funding for the neighbourhood centre peak body. I am pleased to announce that we are restoring the peak body for our neighbourhood and community centres, with \$120,000 going towards re-establishing this vital organisation. It is all about putting our money where our mouth is with this state budget to ensure the future of our vital neighbourhood and community centres to benefit all of Queensland.