

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 887**  
**Asked on Thursday 19 August 2004**

**Mr Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Minister for Seniors (**Mr Pitt**) -

QUESTION:

With reference to page 2-19 of the Ministerial Portfolio Statements which refers to Regional Disability Councils – Will he outline what new functions these councils will be performing and how they may be an improvement on the previous councils?

ANSWER:

The Government approved a new model for Disability Advisory Bodies in Queensland on 12 July 2004. I am pleased to have the opportunity to detail the significant opportunities this new model provides to regional communities. The new model delivers dynamic and improved linkages with regional Queensland on disability issues.

The Chairs of Regional Disability Councils will come together to form the Membership of the Disability Council of Queensland which is a principal source of community advice to me, as Minister for Disability Services. However the previous model did not provide a strong link to the regions. Regional representation on the Disability Council of Queensland significantly enhances the capacity of rural and regional communities to raise disability issues with me, to influence the statewide agenda for disability services, and to enhance the responsiveness of Government to disability issues.

Under the new model, the number of Regional Disability Councils will increase from nine to ten. Membership of the Regional Disability Councils will ensure improved links between people with a disability, their families, carers and service providers and Government locally. Members of Parliament and Senior Officers of Disability Services Queensland will work with Regional Disability Councils to develop practical, local solutions.

The new Councils will have an increased role in engaging with their local communities on disability issues. Regional Councils will undertake community consultation on major disability sector initiatives and provide open and independent feedback to me on the views and opinions of Queensland communities. Councils will assist in developing approaches to community engagement and consultation that are specifically designed to meet local needs.

Regional Disability Councils will receive advice and practical support to perform their new role, provided by the Department of Communities. Previously, Regional Disability Council Membership was voluntary and unpaid. Under this new approach, Regional Disability Council Chairs and Members will be appropriately remunerated in recognition of the important role of the Councils, and in line with increased expectations of their activities. These arrangements will ensure that the new Regional Disability Councils will have the capacity and expertise to promote disability awareness and increased participation of people with a disability in their local communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Chairs and Members of the current Regional Disability Councils who have demonstrated a commitment and capacity to support disability issues and their ability to work in partnership with the Government to achieve better outcomes for Queenslanders with a disability.