

Question on Notice

No. 1009

Asked on Tuesday 7 August 2007

MS JARRATT MP asked the Minister for Communities, Minister for Disability Services Queensland, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Minister for Seniors and Youth (**MR PITT**)—

Will he advise how the Department of Disabilities is reaching out to people with a disability in regional areas and what new services his department is offering to isolated people with a disability?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government is committed to supporting all Queenslanders with a disability – including those who live in rural and regional locations throughout the state.

The delivery of funding and services to people in regional and rural areas is managed through 10 regional offices. This ensures that services are more accessible and tailored to local needs. Regional Disability Councils operate in each of these 10 regions to ensure a close relationship with people with a disability across the state.

Disability Services Queensland has also introduced a number of strategies to ensure the delivery of services to people with a disability living in rural and regional areas, including the Local Area Coordination Program. The program assist clients to access mainstream services and support communities to welcome and support people with a disability. The department's 50 Local Area Coordinators operate in 34 locations across the state – and assisted more than 2,000 people during 2006-07.

Just last month saw the latest expansion of the Local Area Coordination Program into the Belyando and Broadsound Shires.

This program provides significant support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability, with approximately 30% of all people registered with the program identifying as Indigenous.

Another strategy for linking people in rural and regional locations with disability services is through a supports facilitator. They work with clients of Disability Services Queensland programs to help them access information and to plan and access suitable services.

The department also has a number of programs which have a significant focus on rural and regional service delivery.

For example, \$1.4 million was allocated to the Spinal Injuries Association to assist Queenslanders with a spinal cord injury. Of the people assisted through the initiative in 2006-07, two thirds were in rural and regional locations.

Funding has been provided through an Early Intervention Initiative to improve access to services for children with autism. Services to Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns are being expanded.

Succession Planning is particularly beneficial to people in rural and regional areas. The initiative assists people with disabilities and their families to plan formal and informal networks to support the family as their needs and circumstances change over time.

The needs of families living in rural and regional services through the continued expansion of respite services was enhanced with an additional \$4 million allocated to expand seven existing non-government respite services and establish 11 new non-government respite services.

Six of the seven expanded respite services were in the rural and regional locations of: Cardwell/Mossman; Mackay; Cooloola Shire; Caloundra Shire; Noosa Shire and Redland district.

Of the 11 new services, nine will operate in the rural and regional locations of Esk/Gatton/Laidley corridor, Coomera, Caboolture, Dalby, Bundaberg, Biloela, Capricorn Coast, Thuringowa and the Tablelands.

The department also provided grants to a number of non-government organisations in rural and regional centres to assist with additional costs associated with staff attending training in these locations.

One of the initiatives that I am most proud of is the Shared Visions regional forums being held in 10 locations throughout the state. These forums invite members of the disability community to inform us of the needs specific to their region. I've greatly enjoyed attending these forums as they give me the chance to meet with local members of the disability sector and hear of the exciting work they've been doing, and what opportunities exist to partner regional communities in the future.

The examples outlined above are just some of the many departmental programs which take into consideration the additional needs and requirements of people with a disability living in rural and regional locations.