

Question on Notice

No. 899

Asked on Thursday, 7 June 2007

MRS ATTWOOD 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 PIT**T)-

Will he outline strategies relating to improving prevention and early intervention services for vulnerable families?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government has four key strategies to improve prevention and early intervention services for vulnerable families: building a continuum of services; strengthening existing services; promoting integrated service delivery; and building the evidence base through rigorous evaluation.

Building a continuum of services

This includes funding for a range of services that deal with the most vulnerable families, such as those at risk of entry to the child protection system. Services include Referral for Active Intervention and specialist child and family counselling services for families who are experiencing problems involving mental illness, the abuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances, domestic and family violence, child sexual assault and other issues that impact on a family's ability to protect their children from abuse and neglect.

Strengthening existing services

The Department of Communities has enhanced existing prevention and early intervention services through additional funding allocated in 2006-07. This includes, but is not limited to, allocations to Micah Projects to enhance their 'Young Mothers for Young Women' program which provides early childhood programs and family support services in the Brisbane area for pregnant and parenting women aged under 25; and the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN), for the 'Play a Part' program to promote prevention of child abuse and child friendly communities through community education seminars in the Chermside, Inala Toowoomba, Springfield Lakes and Gold Coast areas.

Promoting integrated service delivery

Research demonstrating significant benefits for families and children from integrated services underpins the development of four new Early Years Centres in identified areas of need. The Early Years Centres will be places where families with children (birth to 8 years) can access integrated early childhood education and care, family support and health services. The centres will provide universal services, with some targeted services to be delivered or brokered, and referrals to specialist or intensive support services when required.

Building the evidence base through rigorous evaluation.

Evaluation of the Referral for Active Intervention services has commenced in parallel with implementation. A full evaluation will be completed by the end of 2008 and will determine the next steps including any potential expansion of these services to provide State-wide coverage. A range of other services are undergoing evaluations and the results are used in refinement of services models and to inform further policy development.