



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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APPROPRIATION BILLS—ESTIMATES D

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.06 p.m.): I wanted to be a member of Estimates Committee D because I am particularly interested in some of the social welfare issues with which it dealt. In particular, in speaking today, I want to focus on disability services. Ipswich has a higher than average proportion of people with disabilities, thanks largely to decades of conservative government policy of using this Labor voting area as a dumping ground for institutions. The positive result of that concentration is that there is wide support in the broader community for the integration of people with disabilities and a strong network of community organisations providing disability services. These people and organisations have provided care for many years for their families and friends in a virtual absence of government support. While public focus is now on the level of unmet need in our community, those who have some experience in the area acknowledge the huge inroads the Beattie government has made in caring for people and families who need it.

In the first two years of its term, this government has added \$63 million to the budget of Disability Services Queensland—much more than our election commitment of \$44 million. Budget initiatives include the funding of an additional 260 Adult Lifestyle Support and Moving Ahead packages, and the continued relocation of people from government and non-government institutions. There was also \$5 million in the budget to support the Endeavour Foundation and \$800,000 for the Cerebral Palsy League, both of which provide excellent support for people.

In the lead-up to the last election the Beattie government made an important commitment to build new and enhanced respite and family support services in all regions across Queensland. This commitment has been more than met, with 31 new centres in this term, including Jeff's Place and the new Jefferis Turner Centre, which opened in Ipswich a couple of months ago. Additional respite care has been needed in Ipswich for some time. The new centre gives families who care for their children with disabilities at home a chance to have a break. It allows them to keep providing that care, which is what the community needs and what those people want to do. The new centres will provide respite care for around 1,000 people across Queensland.

The other really important point that came out of estimates for me was the success we have had in Ipswich in involving the whole community in juvenile justice. In response to a question I asked of Minister Spence, the minister made it clear that Ipswich and Goodna make more use of community conferencing than any other police stations in the state. In the last year, 77 cases of juvenile crime were referred to community conferences; that is, young people who have done the wrong thing sat down with their victims and relevant community members to discuss what they did, why they did it and how their crime affected others.

I am a big supporter of community conferencing. It breeds understanding and allows young people to take responsibility for their actions and for the community to get involved. Importantly, it also reduces the rate of recidivism. I am very proud to see it working well in Ipswich. The Estimates process is a good one for departments and ministers. It gives them the opportunity to get into the nitty-gritty of what is happening in their portfolio areas. It is also a real opportunity for members. While some on the other side of the House have complained about the process, it has very much been my view, having watched it from government and opposition in this House and in other jurisdictions, that members get out of Estimates what they put into it.