



Speech by

Andrew Cripps

MEMBER FOR HINCHINBROOK

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APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE D

Mr CRIPPS (Hinchinbrook—LNP) (8.13 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the report of Estimates Committee D, particularly in relation to the Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs portfolio for which I am the shadow minister. I want to thank the chairman, the member for Brisbane Central, and the other members of Estimates Committee D, as well as the staff attached to the committee for the cooperative and efficient way the committee operated leading up to and during the proceedings.

I want to focus on two issues regarding disability services. Firstly, I want to express concern about the attitude of the minister to declining satisfaction rates amongst those people with disabilities who receive support services from DSQ. I noted that pages 3-25 to 3-27 of the SDS showed that satisfaction fell nine per cent amongst users of accommodation support services, 13 per cent amongst users of community support services and seven per cent amongst users of community access services over the previous 12 months.

I asked specifically during estimates if the minister could explain why client satisfaction rates for these services had declined so significantly and what DSQ intended to do to address the situation. The minister largely dismissed the declining rates of satisfaction with support services delivered by DSQ by saying that an increasing number of service users were indifferent about the services they received and that an increasing number of service users were not sending their survey forms back, to defend DSQ against poor results. I am rather surprised that the minister is not taking the results of the survey more seriously. Excuses will not deliver appropriate support services to Queenslanders with disabilities. The minister needs to take action to find out the real cause of these declining satisfaction rates because these are important core services provided by DSQ to Queenslanders with disabilities.

Last year spending on disability services was down \$23 million on budgeted outlays—specifically, underspending on accommodation support services was in the order of \$8 million and underspending on community support services was in the order of \$15 million. This underspending on important core services may explain the survey results and may even explain why Queenslanders with disabilities and their families have given up on returning their survey forms.

Secondly, I wish to talk about the implementation of the Carter report, also known as the Investing in Positive Futures program, which seeks to support the care of adults with an intellectual and/or cognitive disability who exhibit challenging behaviours. I asked the minister about the costs associated with implementing the Carter report and requested an itemised breakdown of all expenditure to date. It is virtually impossible to compare the 2008-09 Capital Statement with the 2009-10 Capital Statement for the purposes of accurately determining what has and what has not been spent in the implementation of the Carter report.

The cost of implementing the recommendations is ballooning. In the 2008-09 budget, \$24.3 million was allocated for the implementation of Carter report recommendations. In the 2009-10 budget, this had blown out to \$61 million—a blow-out of \$36.7 million in just 12 months. The reporting in the budget is far from transparent, especially when allocations are so drastically altered from year to year. In particular, the 2009-10 budget indicates that \$16 million is being allocated for the provision of specialised

accommodation units at Wacol for adults who exhibit challenging behaviour. What we also know from one of the minister's answers to one of my questions is that the funding will deliver 16 beds at that facility at Wacol. That is \$1 million per bed and raises the question of whether the money provided is being used in the best interests of people with disabilities, especially the particularly vulnerable people covered by the Carter report.

There is no doubt that these specialised accommodation units are not your ordinary run of the mill accommodation units. They will necessarily be fitted out with specialist equipment and furniture to meet the needs of those Queenslanders who need this support. At the same time there has been no transparency in the expenditure. At \$1 million per bed, I would like reassurance from the minister that the cost is being fully acquitted on helping people with disabilities. Something is wrong out at Wacol with the cost of construction. There have been delays, cost blow-outs and changes. The figures do not add up, and the people who ultimately pay will be those people with disabilities exhibiting challenging behaviour. The minister needs to provide more answers about the delivery of this project. An investigation should be undertaken to find out exactly what is happening at Wacol.