

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Students with Disabilities

Hon. A.M. Bligh (South Brisbane – ALP) (Minister for Education and the Arts)
(9.55am on 18.0.2004):

Students with disabilities are set to get a better deal from the state government under a new 10-point plan to boost inclusive education in Queensland schools. The plan is in response to the final report of the ministerial taskforce on inclusive education, which I set up in March 2002. In line with the report's recommendations, I will immediately establish a ministerial advisory committee and increase funding for the professional development of teachers in the 2005 school year.

The state government will also move immediately on another key recommendation of the task force: calling for ascertainment-the current process for allocating resources to schools-to be phased out. The government intends replacing the ascertainment process with a simpler, more flexible resourcing methodology from the start of the 2005 school year and has allocated significant new funds in the next year to achieve this objective. I reaffirm the government's commitment to improving the education of students with disabilities, and I table the report of the task force and the government's response for the benefits of members.

The government supports 11 of the 12 recommendations made by the task force and is moving immediately to implement them. The government does not support one recommendation to prepare a green paper on inclusive education only because it is our view that the government has a clear vision and direction for inclusive education and believes preparing a green paper may slow the process of improvement.

It is clear from the task force report and the government response that we value students with disabilities and their families and are reaching a high level of consensus about the key issues around inclusive education. It is important that students, parents and care givers are included in decision making and that our policies, teacher training and school syllabus are all inclusive.

I take this opportunity to congratulate task force chair, Professor John Elkins, of the Schonell Educational Research Centre at the University of Queensland and his team on their final report. Members of the task force represented a broad cross-section of the education sector and the community. While I am advised that many differing views were expressed during meetings, the final report reflects the majority view. I thank the members of the task force for their time and dedication over the past two years. The government recognises the importance of ensuring that all students are supported to achieve their full potential.