

## **DISABILITY AWARENESS WEEK**

*Statement by Minister for Disability Services*

**HON SIMON O'BRIEN (South Metropolitan — Minister for Disability Services)** [11.08 am]: With Disability Awareness Week almost upon us, it is timely for the house to note the progress achieved by the government in the area of disability services.

Members may recall that at this time last year the Premier launched Count Me In — Disability Future Directions, a 15-year strategy for a future where all people live in welcoming communities that facilitate citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone. This first year of awareness raising and planning for Count Me In will conclude with Disability Awareness Week from 29 November to 3 December, the International Day of People with Disability. Already, more than 200 organisations across the state are participating in Disability Awareness Week. Some of the activities for Disability Awareness Week include a forum for organisations and community groups interested in improving access to beaches, rivers and lakes, and for those already providing beach wheelchairs and beach matting; and the announcement of three \$15 000 research scholarships to support a better future for people with disability. Scholarship recipients will share their findings with the disability sector and others to influence policy and practice for the benefit of people with disabilities. I will also be launching a dedicated Count Me In ambassadors program to spread the word and key messages of Count Me In. A range of community displays and activities are also planned. On 3 December, the International Day of People with Disability, there will be the announcement of the annual Count Me In award winners to recognise the outstanding efforts of individuals, government, business and educational and training organisations on projects or initiatives that create more welcoming communities for people of all abilities.

The Disability Services Commission's local area coordination program recently won the Strengthening Families and Communities category of the Premier's Awards. Awards like these are a great recognition for the commission, and I am proud of that achievement. But of course we are not in it for awards and there are many things being done by this Liberal-National government that are making a real difference to people's lives, including the alternatives to employment service, which has seen the approval of all received plans resulting in an increase of 90.5 per cent in funding for individuals, and an increase in target service hours of 120 per cent. This is significant value for money for people who need meaningful day activities for personal development and connection to the community. This year has seen the provision of a little over \$250 000 to local governments to assist them to join the You're Welcome WA initiative, which provides information on more than 2 400 accessible venues, services and facilities for people with disability living in or visiting WA. The Pursuing the Community Living initiative is a community-focused program emphasising the natural supports of family, friends and the local community, and the important contribution they make to successful independent living for people with disability. In the critical area of respite, we have established a school holiday respite program and are delivering five respite facilities across Western Australia, with Broome fully operational, and work progressing well in Clarkson, Rockingham, Gosnells and York. We saw a record total disability services budget for 2010-11 of \$540.2 million. In 2009-10 more than 21 000 Western Australians accessed a disability support service—an increase of five per cent on the previous year—and over 80 per cent of service users were happy with the support they received. We are also doing more to support younger people with disabilities living in residential aged care by providing more appropriate accommodation and making sure there is more access to more age-appropriate community services.

We know that Western Australia will look substantially different in the future. Currently, one in five Western Australians has a disability, and within 15 years this figure is expected to increase to around one in four, largely as a result of our ageing population. As we head towards Disability Awareness Week and International Day of People with Disability, we all need to consider how we can make our own communities more accessible, more inclusive and more welcoming for every Western Australian. I urge members to think about this as we approach Disability Awareness Week.

Consideration of the statement made an order of the day for the next sitting, on motion by **Hon Ed Dermer**.