

Mrs **BUTLER**

Mr Deputy Speaker, I had the pleasure on Friday evening to represent the Premier at the launch of a new organisation called 'Star Tasmania'. It is not the FM radio station in Break O'Day, it happens to be an amalgamation of two organisations that have been helping with supported accommodation for people with disabilities.

The CEO of the organisation is Rhonda McLachlan who gave a very impressive speech. This is a specialised community-based organisation which provides residential in-home and respite services for people with disabilities. It was established in July following the amalgamation of the established community residential support agencies, Supported Housing and Star Tasmania. Sometimes when organisations such as these get together, when they have such a good history of their own organisational development, there are jealousies and it is very difficult to get the organisations together but they have decided to take the best of the two organisations and put it together and I have a great hope about the way that they will move forward.

They now employ in excess of 100 casual and part-time support staff across 10 different sites and the client group consists of a broad range of people from varying backgrounds with varying types and levels of disabilities. Supported Housing began operation in 1989 after the closure of the Willow Court complex in New Norfolk and we are well aware of the chequered history of that organisation. The closure of Willow Court came as a result of the process of deinstitutionalisation which involved the resettlement of residents into the community, typically into shared group homes. Supported Housing began with two such groups in Howrah and since that time the organisation has evolved significantly and prior to the 2009 merger it was responsible for six sites.

Star Tasmania Inc. was formed in July 1994 with two sites in Claremont and Montrose. These were transferred from Disability Services' residential program and in September of that year there was a third site opened in Kingston. A steady expansion saw Star Tasmania grow to four sites prior to merging with Supported Housing in July.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the Government has a clear vision for the future. We are committed to improving services for people with disabilities, their families and their carers. There were over 200 people attending on Friday night including 30 clients and it was a really well-organised event with lots of attention to detail, and a lovely warm feeling through it all and it was good to see.

This Government brought Disability Services directly into the purview of the Premier because it is of high importance to us. The achievement of this vision relies on organisations that show a strong focus on achieving positive outcomes for people who access their services. We are aiming for a service system which is responsive to the needs of people with disabilities, and one that delivers high quality services through effective partnership and collaboration.

As an ex-social worker and a member of the Government, I am always excited to see growth in services for people with disabilities. This new organisation will provide specialised community-based residential care for people throughout a variety of locations in southern Tasmania.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I congratulate the Supported Tenancy Accommodation and Respite on achieving this partnership and wish them all the very best for a wonderful future.