

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 92/2006**  
**8 August 2006**

The Opposition profoundly disagree with the comments of the Government in their response to the Disability Society. We consider that it is regrettable that the attitude which the Government has displayed in this case is unfortunately rather high-handed.

It is not right for the Government to brush aside the views of the Society and of the families of disabled persons as if these were not important.

In its response to the Society, the Government has called for a debate based on the facts. The most important fact, that the Chief Minister has not addressed in his reply, is that the persons using the service have been complaining for years that it is not working properly.

It will be recalled that ever since the days of Milbury many people who have to deal with the Social Services Department on a regular basis have expressed their discontent.

Moreover, the complaints that have been put to the Minister over the years involve detailed, factual accounts and these grievances have all been ignored and swept under the carpet.

The Government reaction to this discontent, as always, is very dismissive. They should listen to the concerns that are being expressed and cease to behave as if they are infallible and above criticism.

On 26 May the Disability Society organised a demonstration outside the House of Assembly to drive home to the Government the concerns of disabled persons and their families.

The Society claimed that the advice and possible solutions which they have offered over ten years has been ignored by the Government. It complained that the Dr Giraldi Home was full and was overflowing into the Respite Unit. The Society claimed that St Bernadette's Occupational Therapy Centre had seen a lack of understanding and interest on the part of the Government. It

accused the Government of having failed the most vulnerable members of our Community.

Indeed, as far back as November 2005, Shadow Minister for Social Services Charles Bruzon highlighted the problems with the provision of respite care. This service had not been provided at the time since the middle of June 2005.

The response of the Government to the demonstration and the letter which was handed to the Chief Minister on that day has understandably not allayed the concerns of those affected.

Commenting on the matter, Shadow Minister for Social Services Charles Bruzon said:

“I am very sorry to see that the response of the Government to the claims of the Society lacks any humanity or compassion. I have accused the Government of this in the past over a whole range of issues and this is more of the same.

There are many people coming to the Opposition with serious complaints against the Social Services Department. The attitude of the Government is completely mistaken and I pray that they will see the error of their ways.

We pledge our full support to the users of the service and the Disability Society that does sterling work on their behalf.”

ENDS