The principal Act (of 1974) which this seeks to amend, provides subsidies for capital development, rental, maintenance, salaries and training fees to training centres, residential accommodation and activity therapy centres caring for handicapped persons. In addition, it provides for payment of a benefit of $3.50 per day for each handicapped child under 16 years residing in an approved home. Formerly, this benefit was paid under Division 5A of the National Health Act 1953–68.

THE PURPOSE OF THE BILL IS TO: increase the benefit of $3.50 per day to $5 per day from 1 November 1976. The benefit is currently payable to 86 eligible voluntary, religious, charitable or local government organisations in respect of 1,400 children engaged in training programs.

IMPLICATIONS

- The Minister’s Second Reading Speech does not give a reason for the extent of the increase or its expected benefit to eligible organisations.

- According to the Second Reading Speech, the measure is part of the Government’s program of assistance to the handicapped; in addition, this program includes payments of $30m in 1976–77 and $121m over 3 years under the principal Act above, $14.1m for operation of Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service in 1976–77 and increases in the payments under Social Services Act 1947–76 of handicapped child’s allowance payable to parents from $10 per week to $15 per week.