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Media Release

Budget Measures for 2003

The National Commission Persons with Disability has as its goal the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disability. This goal is both long-term and continuous, as such it must necessarily be tackled in smaller stages, which stages are generally identified as priority areas by the Commission. For 2003, the Commission has identified the following among its longer list of priority areas:

Residential Services

The perennial concern of all disabled persons and their families, is what is to become of the disabled person once the family is no longer able, or in very few instances, willing, to provide the necessary support to enable the disabled individual to live in the community, thus avoiding their constant nightmare: institutionalisation. The *Supported Living Division* within the *Foundation for Social Welfare* was set up precisely with this aim in mind. The Commission strongly recommends that this Division is provided with a realistic, recurrent fund that will sustain it and help it to develop this crucial service.

Employment Scheme

The Commission and the *Employment Training Corporation* are of the opinion that the major initiative in this area is to create and sustain a *Permanent Employment Support Scheme* for persons with a very severe impairment. The Commission is strongly recommending that the scheme receives the necessary funding.

Day Services

A substantial number of adults with disability will always find difficultly to be employed and hence they will need to make use of Day Services throughout their lifetime. The present services are very much under-funded, while the demand increases an average of 30 persons per annum. Therefore, the Commission considers it essential that the budget for these services is increased in order to continue developing them to help them cope with new demands.

VAT On Lifts

Since January 2000, the *Malta Environment and Planning Authority* has been enforcing Accessibility Regulations on all new development projects. One of the major, accessibility-related costs involved any new development is the installation of lifts. In order to ensure fuller compliance with Design for All standards, the Commission is recommending that Government will make VAT exempt lifts installed to comply with these regulations.

Servizz Ghajnuniet Speċjali (SGhS)

The Servizz Ghajnuniet Speċjali (SGhS) provides limited funding support to disabled persons who need to purchase assistive apparatus. This year 103 disabled persons have benefited from financial assistance, while, due to insufficient funds, approximately 112 requests are on the SGhS waiting list. Furthermore, funding is limited to a maximum of Lm500, even when the equipment purchased may cost up to Lm3000, or more. The Commission is recommending that funds for this service are increased.
