



Speech by

**GARY FENLON**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

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Hansard 22 July 1999

**STUDENTS FROM MIGRANT BACKGROUNDS; GREENSLOPES STATE SCHOOL**

**Mr FENLON** (Greenslopes—ALP) (7.26 p.m.): I rise to speak on a matter that is of growing concern in my electorate and other parts of Brisbane. Recently, I was approached by people from the Greenslopes State School community and the Coorparoo community who wished to assist the growing numbers of students and families from migrant backgrounds. These citizens expressed concern about how we could ensure that these newly arrived Australians were not marginalised or that they did not miss out on the service delivery that most of us expect.

At the Greenslopes State School the student population consists of 210 children. Of these, 70 students, or 30%, are eligible for English as a second language assistance. To qualify for such assistance a student needs to have arrived in Australia within the past three years. Some 30% of students at the school are from families who have arrived in the past three years. A large majority of these are from the former Yugoslavia. The number who have arrived recently but more than three years ago is, of course, significantly higher.

It is a truism that children adapt more rapidly to new social circumstances than adults. Certainly, immersion in a school environment tends to hasten the adoption of a new language. The citizens who have approached me expressed concern about the parents of these children, thus taking a whole of family approach at a truly community level. As is the case with so many migrants, members of the community from the former Yugoslavia arrived in Australia enlivened with considerable optimism and enthusiasm. However, their spirits tend to falter when it becomes clear that employment is difficult to find.

One of the recent arrivals I have met has been selling the excellent magazine the Big Issue, reserved for sale exclusively by the unemployed. Many of these people were well respected professionals in their own land but now have difficulties in finding employment because of their English skills. The result can be incredible isolation and depression. The Greenslopes and Coorparoo communities have sought—

Time expired.

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