



Speech by

Dr LESLEY CLARK

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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SPORTING AND ARTS ACADEMY, CAIRNS

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): Earlier this week, I spoke about a proposal that was put forward at the regional communities conference in Cairns for the establishment of a sporting and arts academy, which has my very strong support. There is great concern in our community that young, talented sportspersons and artists, including those in the performing arts and music, are missing out on the opportunity to develop their talent and, in many cases, families have to move to the south-east corner of Queensland if they are to support their sons or daughters' careers.

There is a basic question of equity at stake here. Talented young people should have the same opportunities to reach their potential wherever they live or whatever their field. While the regional communities forum will pursue this concept of an academy, the particular issue that I want to raise tonight is the cost involved for our young people travelling from Cairns to south-east Queensland to represent their State in sporting and artistic competitions.

I am often approached to sponsor young people who have to undertake extensive fundraising to meet their travel and accommodation expenses. Parents themselves have to spend thousands of dollars over many years if their son or daughter is to play at an elite level in their chosen field. For example, Anika Bradley, an incredibly talented 16-year-old Cairns girl who has represented Queensland in softball, told an International Women's Day breakfast last week that she dreams of being the world's best pitcher. To achieve that dream, she will need considerable financial support. It is a similar picture for our young musicians. Recently, I was approached by Stephen Srhoj, whose daughter, Tamara, plays in the Mareeba State School concert band, which has been selected to play in Brisbane at the Queensland Band and Orchestra Conference. The trip will cost \$10,000.

I have already made representations to the Minister for Sport, Bob Gibbs, about this matter with respect to exploring what assistance could be provided to young sportsmen and women who are selected to represent their State and I will also be talking to the Arts Minister, Matt Foley. The bottom line is that, at present, a talented child is not likely to really reach their full potential unless they have parents with the resources to finance their careers—a situation that I find untenable. I shall finish by quoting from the correspondence from Councillor Srhoj in relation to this matter. He states—

"There is more at stake than small financial assistance to these remote people. Without assistance these students lose the desire to achieve goals at a high level in individual/group sporting and cultural fields and then miss out on the honour of representing the State and country."
