



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

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COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (11 p.m.): Tonight I wish to speak about the shared use of community and school facilities and particularly the partnerships that can be forged with organisations such as Police Citizens Youth Clubs to facilitate shared use. Several honourable members have spoken recently about the need to better utilise our school facilities beyond the times they are used in the school day, particularly in the evenings, on weekends and during holiday periods. There is a huge public investment in these facilities, which in effect are underutilised relative to their value. Additionally, a large amount of activity space is locked up and generally not easily accessible to the community, apart from some limited use by some groups.

Another issue relates to the security of school grounds. Vacant grounds and buildings are more likely to attract undesirable attention from vandals and also make it easier for criminals to gain access without detection. Therefore, we need to be looking at ways of better utilising our school buildings and facilities. In effect, this represents a wasted opportunity, and it is in the public interest to resolve this matter. One way to address it is to develop strategic partnerships between schools and appropriate community organisations for a more efficient use of school facilities.

The Minister for Education recently initiated a very worthwhile program to assist this process, and I am referring to the School and Community Capital Innovator Scheme. This scheme provides funding to help school communities achieve a greater use of their facilities by the wider community. It is an exciting scheme which has the potential to deliver significant benefits to schools and the community and, importantly, make more efficient use of our expensive public school facilities.

Although the program is new, the concept of joint use of school facilities has been around for some time, although not at the scale that is needed. For example, many schools have swimming pools which are used not only by the school but also by outside community swimming clubs. Another example was provided to me by the member for Ashgrove. The Gap State High School developed an athletics facility on its grounds in partnership with The Gap Little Athletics Club and The Gap Rangers Athletics Club. They now have lighting and other facilities which deliver benefits both to the school and to the general community. They are good examples based on sound principles, but they are only scratching the surface of what can be achieved with shared use.

The Department of Education has around \$5 billion in assets and it is a tremendous waste to have that amount of assets sitting idle for around 50% of the potentially active time throughout the year. That leads me to a proposal that I believe would provide a great opportunity to better utilise these assets. The particular proposal I have is to involve the Police Citizens Youth Club, which has an excellent track record of providing safe, supervised recreational activities for young people throughout the State. The PCYC has been in existence for over 50 years, making a positive contribution to the lives of many young people and local communities. I think that the model that they operate under is uniquely suited to developing strong partnerships with the Education Department and with particular schools.

The location of a PCYC facility on school grounds would provide a number of benefits. The school is, firstly, likely to have enough land or, in some cases, existing buildings which could house a PCYC, which would reduce the cost of establishing the centre. Developing a PCYC on school grounds would expand the funding options available, for instance, the School and Community Capital

Innovators Scheme, which I have referred to, and also the School Improvement Assistance Scheme in addition to funding programs offered by the Office of Sport. The use of the facility would also be enhanced by school usage during weekdays and community use both on school days and also after hours—on weekends and during the school holidays. The presence of an active PCYC on school grounds would also enhance security at the school. An extra staff person, who is assigned to each PCYC centre under appropriate arrangements, could also supplement the existing recreational staff or sporting staff of a school.

I believe that schools and a PCYC are uniquely placed to develop a dynamic partnership which could deliver recreational facilities for young people and also facilities for use by the wider community. Both organisations exist to service the needs of youth, so there is a sound starting point for negotiations to commence between them. An alliance with the Education Department, in my view, makes sense. I will be writing to the relevant Ministers and the PCYC to encourage them to explore the possibilities I have referred to tonight.
