



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPIILLY

Hansard 20 June 2000

CAIRNS OFFICE OF DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES, YOUTH AND COMMUNITY CARE

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (11 p.m.): Late last week, following instructions from Minister Bligh, the Cairns office of the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care slashed the number of youth workers at that office from eight to four. This office is very important. This cutback in youth workers means only half the number of youth workers will be in the Cairns office to assist those juveniles who go to court and are given, under supervision, immediate release orders or community service orders. Further, this means that the courts will be faced with little option but to give juveniles detention or, alternatively, unsupervised immediate release or community service orders.

These are very important issues. I might add that this is happening following the recent appointment of an additional regional director in Cairns. So while there is plenty of money for regional directors and people in the hierarchy of the operation in Cairns, there is no money for workers at the coalface, particularly youth workers. The Cairns office not only services Cairns, it also services centres such as the Yarrabah community and a wide area of far-north Queensland.

In recent weeks and months we have witnessed a high degree of rhetoric in relation to this Government keeping young offenders out of detention. Yet the actions of this Beattie Labor Government clearly show that it is mean spirited when it comes to the youth workers and to young people in this State. It shows that it is disinterested in the antisocial behavioural patterns and criminal behaviour of these young people by not providing sufficient people at the coalface to assist those who have these antisocial behaviours which lead to problems within the community—and within the family—or unfortunately lead on to criminal activity.

We now find that the Wangetti school, situated some 45 minutes north of Cairns, which is a residential co-ed boarding school with some 65 students in attendance, has 12 students on community based orders with a majority of orders being probation and community service orders. With the closure of the Petford youth training centre, this school is now being used as a training centre—as a youth camp—for so many of the young people who would have gone to Petford. Currently these youth workers at the Cairns office travel each Friday to Wangetti school to assist, support and supervise the completion of community service orders between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. on a Friday. This support service will now cease. Not only is it affecting people in the Cairns and Yarrabah areas, but this school is now taking so many of those young people who previously went to Petford.

These young people have a range of offending behaviour, such as substance abuse, violence, mental health issues, break and enter offences and various other types of criminal activity. It is little wonder that concerns are now being raised by the staff at Wangetti school that there is a large number of students predominantly—unfortunately—of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin who reside and are schooled at this facility. These students have received a large number of community based orders from the courts but, of course, the effective delivery of support services that are so urgently needed by the school will now cease.

This cutback comes hot on the heels of the Government ceasing to fund the Petford Aboriginal youth training centre. If one has a look at the Cairns office, which is a mirror of what is happening in the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care around the State, one finds that staff members

have access to a very limited number of motor vehicles. Some 37 staff have seven vehicles and one of those is allotted to the child protection team, which means that there are six vehicles for 33 staff. Because of this limited number of motor vehicles and because they have to travel over such a large area of north Queensland, many of them cannot go about their daily activities to ensure that the services that they have to deliver are, in fact, delivered. How then are the family service officers, the youth workers and others providing services to the people of far-north Queensland over these vast distances to deliver these services? It is little wonder that we now find that the staff are going on strike. Even on Monday this week there was again a strike at the Cairns office of the department because of the cutbacks and because of the inadequate resources that we are finding across-the-board. It is little wonder that, despite the rhetoric from the Government about providing services, when it comes to delivery at the coalface, it is caught short and found wanting.

Meanwhile, it is not difficult for the Government to find some \$300m for the Lang Park extensions or several hundred thousands for the "Beattie burger". It is no trouble at all for the "Beattie burger", the new emblem that I notice is appearing on all the stationery around the place and on Government brochures which cost us some hundreds of thousands of dollars. I am sure that part of that cost is also being borne by the Department of Families, yet the staff of the department are not given sufficient support or sufficient numbers to carry out the workloads and to undertake the case studies that are required of them.

Time expired.
