



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

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BOYSTOWN

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (12.15 p.m.): I have continually expressed my concern about the way in which BoysTown at Beaudesert has been downgraded by the ALP. I am talking about the actual facility at BoysTown and not necessarily the BoysTown facility, about which the Minister for Public Works was very complimentary this morning, and which is actually Link-Up at Woodridge. I am talking about the excellent facilities at BoysTown to which up to 84 young students can be taken.

I remind members that in 1997 the coalition had 84 boys at BoysTown—in fact, one or two extra, because as a special favour they took one or two extra kids who had found trouble. At BoysTown, those 84 students would receive the support, the educational programs and the rehabilitation that they needed. That is a very important thing about BoysTown: it has plenty of activities and plenty of community support to give those boys the support that they need.

It is very unfortunate that the ALP succumbs to those people within their ranks who believe in deinstitutionalisation—not just a little bit of deinstitutionalisation; a complete revamp of all of those facilities such as mental health facilities and anything else that might to them look like an institution. It is completely unfair to see a place like BoysTown, which provides so much excellent assistance to those particular boys, being downgraded completely to the extent that, although 84 places are available at BoysTown and are paid for by the government, at present I would say there are probably only a dozen young children using the facilities.

The Department of Families, which has its workers going out to the magistrates courts and recommending to the magistrate places to which young children can be sent, are not recommending them to places like BoysTown because they have this thought that it is an institution and that it should be downgraded. I find continually that the ALP is going through reviews of all of these places, coming up with a review that might find that, over many, many years ago something may have happened, and then turning around and saying, 'Therefore, we need to close that particular institution.' I can see what will happen at BoysTown: someone is going to come up with something that happened many, many years ago and they are going to say, 'Look at the money that is being spent there. We have only a dozen boys there; therefore we are going to close BoysTown.'

To hear the Minister for Education the other day—she did not realise that the Department of Education looks after the education facilities at BoysTown and the work that is done there, and at present has dropped the number of students and teachers from 17 to seven—

Ms BLIGH: I rise to a point of order. I find it untrue and offensive. I was completely aware of Education Queensland's views, but the member's question was framed in the wrong way. I ask for it to be withdrawn.

Mr LINGARD: I withdraw because the minister went right off and said that I, as a former Minister for Families, should realise that it was not she who gives the funding; it was the Minister for Families. However, obviously the Department of Education has dropped the number of teachers from 17 to seven.

I refer not only to a facility like BoysTown, where I see a massive waste of facilities, but also to the Minister for Employment and Training, who this morning spoke about some of his access programs on the Gold Coast. The other day I went to a special facility called the Team Employment And Training Network at Moorooka. There I saw magnificent facilities where unemployed people can go and receive education about mechanics, spray-painting, panel beating, retail courses, office administration,

landscaping and information technology. They had a special section that provided clothing for those young people who are going to interviews. There at Moorooka is a magnificent facility, which previously had been very successful in providing employment programs but had not received federal funding two years ago. Now you could say that it is a complete waste of a magnificent facility provided by a community organisation. Through a DEET program, the Minister for Employment and Training could provide facilities and could provide assistance to this program if he wanted to.

In Queensland we have 8.9 per cent unemployment and 23.8 per cent unemployment for youth. Yet in the minister's own electorate is a magnificent facility which, for lack of funding, is not providing assistance to those young people. Also, at Salisbury one can find exactly the same sort of thing. One can find rooms containing massive numbers of computers and lots of information technology, but because of lack of funding from the state government that equipment is not providing any service to the young unemployed. I say to the government that it is wasting facilities at BoysTown and it is wasting facilities in employment and training that could be beneficial to young people.

Time expired.
