



Speech by

BONNY BARRY

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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MS L. M. DOHERTY, YOUTH PARLIAMENTARIAN; HEALTH CARE

Ms BARRY (Aspley—ALP) (7.30 p.m.): Tonight I would like to report to the House the work undertaken by the 2003 Aspley electorate youth parliamentarian, Ms Lelia Maree Doherty, from Bridgeman Downs, whom I welcome to the gallery tonight. I would like to particularly thank her for her passionate and thoughtful contribution to our electorate during her time as our youth parliamentarian.

The young people of the Aspley electorate have made a significant contribution to the YMCA Youth Parliament in the past and Lelia Maree's efforts this year have lifted the bar another notch higher. The Aspley electorate has been represented in the past by Pine Rivers State High School students and Mr Callum Downie, the 2002 youth parliamentarian, continues to make a real difference to the youth of Aspley through his work as my assistant electorate officer.

As part of her work for the youth parliament health committee, Lelia Maree undertook a survey of young people in the electorate that sought their views on youth access to health care in the Aspley electorate. She was assisted in this task by Callum Downie, students of Craigslea and Pine Rivers State High Schools, Aspley Rotoract, and Aspley and District Rover Scouts. I have given a report to the Minister for Health because it was such an interesting and compelling report.

The key areas discussed were access to health care by young people and their satisfaction with care and health care provision for young people who suffer from stress and unhappiness. The survey reflected the views of young people aged 12 to 25. The results are very valuable if not a little disturbing. Ninety-six per cent of young people in Aspley accessed health care through their GP. Nearly half of them found that health care access expensive and over a quarter of them found that that cost stopped them from making follow-up appointments for health care. In fact, it found that there was reduced access to health care directly related to the cost of seeing a local general health practitioner.

Luckily, satisfaction with health care services was very high at 83 per cent. When asked what could be improved young people indicated—48 per cent of them—counselling services in particular needed improvement. That finding resonates with the fact that 72 per cent of young people identified stress and unhappiness as a significant health care issue for young people in the electorate. Interestingly, 62 per cent could only get access to doctors in the presence of care givers because of age and cost.

Lelia Maree indicates that the findings show that services to young people in the Aspley electorate in particular need to be affordable, accessible by young people themselves, sensitive to the needs of young people, respectful of them and dedicated specifically in terms of service provision and type. She suggests improving bulk-billing rates, providing access to individual Medicare cards and continuing the access to school nurses.

I found the survey and its results a compelling document. It sends the clear message that we are at risk of failing young people at their most vulnerable when health care through a GP becomes unaffordable and when young people do not feel that they can have private and meaningful discussions to discuss mental health issues—the very issue that contributes to the alarming loss of young lives to suicide. It compels me most certainly to ramp up my defence of Medicare and bulk-billing in our community where we have suffered the largest loss of bulk-billing doctors in this state. It should indeed compel every single member to listen to what young people have to say and to fight for the health care needs of young people of our electorates. I would like to thank Lelia Maree for her outstanding efforts.