



Speech by

ELISA ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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APPROPRIATION BILL [No. 2]; APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL [No. 2]

Miss ELISA ROBERTS (Gympie—Ind) (2.50 p.m.): I am pleased to be able to take this opportunity to discuss the appropriation bills 2003 as I always relish the chance to speak about money, particularly in regards to my electorate.

Mrs Carryn Sullivan: Particularly when it is someone else's.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: Even better! It is timely that this bill is being debated as I have been approached by members within my electorate about the establishment of a disability village—much like a retirement village—for people with disabilities to reside in. I have a petition regarding such a proposal which I seek leave to table.

Leave granted.

Miss ELISA ROBERTS: The parents and carers who have planned this proposal are aware of the contentiousness surrounding people with disabilities living in close proximity. However, these people believe that in an accredited and safe environment with qualified care givers on site this type of living arrangement could be successful. The misconception that people with disabilities do not wish to live together or should not be placed together in a living environment really needs to be investigated, as many parents and those who do have a disability feel that living in close proximity to each other is a natural and commonsense approach. Examples of how well these people interact can be seen by how well people with a disability work together at places such as the Red Cross. It is not realistic to think that people with severe mental and physical disabilities will ever be completely or successfully integrated into mainstream society.

As a result of the recent discussions and papers regarding disability services and how to best allocate funding and resources, a group of people in my electorate have come up with an alternative way for people with a disability to live and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to trial this concept. These people genuinely have the interests of their charges at heart and would greatly appreciate some funding in order to establish a new type of living centre. Some believe that a new approach needs to be taken in regards to the allocation of disability funding and these people believe that they may have come up with one example of a viable alternative that hopefully in the long run could save governments, carers and families money.

I turn now to education. Of course, the need for airconditioning in the state schools within my electorate remains high on the agenda for me, parents, teachers and students. I hope that sooner rather than later adequate funding will be made available so that airconditioners can be installed into classrooms.

Still on the topic of education, the Noosa District State High School is lobbying extensively in order to obtain the necessary funding to build and equip a training facility to meet the needs of students from Noosa and surrounding electorates such as Gympie. The requirement for such a facility stems from the fact that future employment opportunities for our youth will be found predominantly in areas such as catering, hospitality, retail and customer service. Therefore, it is imperative that schools are able to provide the necessary vocational training to make it easier for students to make the transition from school to the work force. I believe that the creation of this training centre will incite confidence within the business community by the fact that the future of the tourism industry is being taken seriously and the government is keen to ensure that smaller communities such as Cooroy and Gympie are given a chance to grow and enhance their employment and business opportunities.

It is unfortunate that this particular school's home economics block was not replaced. Four years down the track there is still no capital works funding allocated to its replacement. The school is also in need of more permanent structures as the relocatable buildings that are currently in use are severely impacting on unplanned maintenance funds.

I do hope that the Treasurer will take on board these needs in my electorate and will provide the funding necessary for these projects to see the light of day. There are numerous other projects in areas which require funding, but this short Gympie wish list means a great deal to local residents and I am sure they would all thank the Treasurer in anticipation of his generosity.