



Speech by

## Miss FIONA SIMPSON

MEMBER FOR MAROOCHYDORE

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Hansard 27 May 2003

### SUNSHINE COAST SCHOOLIES FESTIVAL

**Miss SIMPSON** (Maroochydore—NPA) (1.48 a.m.): I want to raise an issue in this parliament to do with a very important festival on the Sunshine Coast which has been well received by young people for a number of years. It is the Sunshine Coast schoolies festival, which has been very professionally and competently run under the auspices of the non-profit group Community Solutions. This group has operated by working with key stakeholders such as police, liquor licensing, voluntary organisations and a range of people to run an outstanding festival on the Sunshine Coast.

The reason members have not seen stories of problems in terms of attacks and public drunkenness when people are more vulnerable on our streets in the same way that they have seen stories about the Gold Coast is the very well coordinated, excellent festival that is put together. There has not been an accident. We used to have significant problems a number of years ago. The community responded and this organisation took an umbrella role in organising it with a range of volunteers and government stakeholders.

My concern is that this festival is about to fall over because that not-for-profit organisation can no longer take the burden of responsibility—the financial and risk responsibility—of running that festival. An appeal has gone to the state government for assistance, particularly in light of the response to the Gold Coast situation. We recognise that there has been a significant problem on the Gold Coast but, as I have mentioned, the reason why the Sunshine Coast has not had those front-page stories of young people being locked up and others acting in a predatory manner towards them without some form of response from the community has been because of a very deliberate and well coordinated strategy. My concern is that, without this festival and that coordination, we are going to see more horror stories that have been occurring in other areas coming back to the Sunshine Coast.

I appeal to the Beattie government not to reject the appeals for assistance. We do not need \$1 million to coordinate and fix this problem on the Sunshine Coast. However, we do need some government assistance. We do need the commitment for coordination. We do need to know that non-profit community organisations are not expected to carry this impossible load. There must be a state response to this and the councils must be part of that. I understand that at least a couple of the councils are willing to do that. I appeal to the state government to work with us in the regions and give us some assistance. It has responded to the Gold Coast situation. It is time to respond now to the Sunshine Coast and also to put a statewide strategy in place so that the other areas that are facing this issue can deal with it in an appropriate way.