



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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DISABILITY ACCESS CARD

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (11.41 a.m.): I rise to speak of something very positive and innovative that would provide people with a disability and their carers better access to their community through venues and activities. Last week I attended a presentation at the Townsville West Community Centre run by Carers Queensland that focused on this project. I believe it would be excellent in the Townsville and Thuringowa region. Congratulations must go to Jane Grant and her organisation for coming up with this great idea. The project was also discussed at a ministerial regional community forum held in Townsville last week. It is such a great idea that it is already running in Mackay, and several other areas have made moves to establish this scheme. It is being implemented statewide in Victoria.

This project is called Access Card, and it would give carers of people with disabilities the opportunity to attend an entertainment venue of their choice free of charge. To be eligible for the access card a person must have a disability and, because of that disability, not be able to access community events without the support of a carer. The card would be held by the person with the disability. On presentation at the venue, the person with the disability would pay for themselves but their carer would be admitted for free.

The scheme is designed to reduce the financial burden associated with the costs of entertainment and leisure events for accompanying carers. Many people with a disability find the current pricing policies of many entertainment venues unfair because they are required to pay for two tickets. Also, the financial burden of paid carers' time remains an inhibiting factor in pursuit of leisure and entertainment. I can express the sentiment no better than Scott Stidston, co-chair of the Burdekin Disability Advisory Group, who stated—

Whenever I access the community with my companion/carers, we are doing so as one entity, as their sole purpose is to assist me. Yet we are charged admission fees, transport costs and meals, et cetera, as two entities. The access card will go a long way towards rectifying the situation as it would allow me to access many services and facilities with my companion/carers for the price of one person.

Townsville is a large regional city where entertainment is a way of life, and this scheme could definitely be well utilised. The Townsville Entertainment Centre plays host to concerts, events and the National Basketball League, to name just a few. The Townsville Civic Theatre is used for big stage productions. There are also cinemas and attractions like Reef Headquarters and the Museum of Tropical Queensland.

Support for the development of the access card system has been given by various groups, including Townsville Enterprise, both the Townsville and Thuringowa city councils and regional and local community services and support groups. These groups would in turn help with promotion and the recruitment of businesses to take part.

I congratulate Mackay, where 72 people have received access cards. Special mention has to go to Noela Sneed, the coordinator of the George Street Neighbourhood Centre. Business support in Mackay has been overwhelming. The entertainment centre, the annual show, basketball arenas, golf clubs, tenpin bowling venues, swimming pools, fitness centres and motels, just to name a few of the venues, have shown support for this scheme.

Funding for this project would be minimal. Initial funding is needed to get the project started and to cover administrative and assessment costs. A small amount of continued funding would possibly be

required, depending on the take-up rate of the scheme. Obviously the main cost of the access card will be borne by the venue operators. Again, that will depend on the success of the access card scheme.

As most people with a disability are on pensions and not in the work force, their disposable income is minimal. This obviously restricts spending on leisure and entertainment. We should be able to give people with a disability the chance to get out into the community and attend events, which so many of us take for granted. This would be a win-win situation. Those venues deciding to take part in this scheme would feel very good that they are doing so, and people with a disability and their carers would be able to go places whereas normally they would not go at all.

The member for Mackay and I have just been discussing this issue. The member for Mackay has talked about these sorts of partnerships working really well. He has come up with the theory that we should not have just PPPs but also PPCPs—public, private and community partnerships. I think that is a great idea, too.

The establishment of a statewide access card scheme would ensure an equitable and consistent approach to admission arrangements for people with a disability who require the support of a carer. Implementation of the scheme is underpinned by the equal opportunity act 1986 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and it would reflect the purpose and intent of the Disability Services Act 1992. The access card would be applied for and eligibility obtained via an interview with a designated assessor. In Queensland the access card, which has been established in Mackay, has already been—

Time expired.