



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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SCHOOLIES FESTIVAL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (10.23 p.m.): This evening I rise to speak about the disgraceful performance of the state government, and in particular Premier Peter Beattie, in relation to the schoolies festival. The decision to withdraw funding from the event next year has been rightly met with great outcry from almost everyone concerned with the schoolies festival except, it would seem, the state government. The members opposite hang on to the argument that schoolies is a local festival and therefore it is not the government's responsibility. This is how they distinguish the event from Indy!

However, to suggest that a festival of this size is a local celebration is an insult to the intellect of Queenslanders. In the words of Mr Beattie on 15 May last year, we have a massive festival. In his letter home to parents of school leavers last year, he said that it is a festival that attracts up to 50,000 school leavers from three states. That does not seem all that local now, does it? According to the government's own drum beating, the festival also includes 285 police on the beat, a temporary 24-hour ambulance station, 30 private security guards, 12 liquor licensing staff and a program in schools around the state to educate school leavers. I would not think a local festival would require this much attention. I also ask the question: how many local festivals generate \$60 million, as schoolies does?

Furthermore, on the Gold Coast schoolies 2004 web site there is a list of information about the departments of Emergency Services, Health, Fair Trading, Attorney-General, Police and Corrective Services, Communities and Families, Education and Transport. I have never known a local event to require the support of so many departments. On this point, it is about time that the relevant ministers realised that schoolies is not a local festival, but is one that attracts tens of thousands of young people from across the country. The government would be derelict in its duty to school leavers if it were to turn its back on this festival in a bid to give responsibility back to the council and relevant stakeholders who were alienated last year when it took over the festival.

In fact, is it any wonder that the department is finding it hard to find people to help run the event this year? Last year when they appointed Michael Cowdroy to the position of event coordinator, the then minister Merri Rose gave him a glowing endorsement, saying that he was an impressive young man. He is a former New South Wales Young Australian of the Year and Young Australian of the Year national finalist. That praise is thoroughly deserved.

Mr Cowdroy turned the festival around from the stabbings of 2002 to keeping Mr Beattie's children safe last year. What thanks did he get? On 6 August he had the privilege of Mr Beattie saying, 'Just because you ran it one year doesn't mean you are the fount of all wisdom and can rearrange the whole Gold Coast.' It is funny, but I thought that Mr Cowdroy would have some idea about the festival and I do not recall Mr Beattie asking him to rearrange the whole Gold Coast. The reason for Mr Beattie's comment was that Mr Cowdroy wanted to see at least some of his recommendations—

Time expired.