



Speech by

Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

Hansard Wednesday, 24 November 2004

DISABILITY SERVICES; ENDEAVOUR FUNDING

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (5.54 p.m.): Tonight's debate comes in the last sitting week of parliament before Christmas. This gives us an opportunity to recognise the wonderful work undertaken by Endeavour for decades. If it were not for the availability of Endeavour's accommodation and the services that it provides, I do not know what thousands of Queensland families would do. I do not know what literally almost every Queensland town would do. In my own town of Toowoomba, which is a major regional centre, I do not know what the town would have done without the magnificent services it has provided over a number of years—that is, approximately 14 residentials, a nursery, a farm and a large number of activity centres for people with severe disabilities to moderate disabilities. Families who lived in south-western Queensland and other parts of Queensland gravitated to regional cities like Toowoomba because it was the only way that they could cope with the disability that their child had—that is, to live near them and help them and nurture them through difficulties.

As I said, it is the last sitting week before Christmas. I do not want to see this debate degenerate into academic issues of funded or unfunded or what we did in the 1980s or did not do or what the Labor Party did or did not do in the 1990s. Tonight we have to concentrate on the fact that there are a number of desperate families who need care for their children. In many cases, these families are families who are getting on in years. They are finding it extremely difficult in their older years to look after their children who may be in supported accommodation and aged in their 20s or 30s or 40s and older. The parents are very worried about the future of these children. Tonight is an opportunity to look at this issue in terms of people rather than the straight and pure venom of politics.

We are proposing that when there is a surplus consideration be given to using a portion of that surplus to help this organisation with this little bit of extra money that is needed. I know there are many demands for extra funds—for health, roads and so on. But in the overall context of the many billions of dollars in our state budget and the surplus that was announced, we are asking that consideration be given to providing what I would term as a modest amount that would see Endeavour's services for these particular people maintained. Endeavour has gone through a rough time over the last decade or so. It goes back to the issue of poker machines. Endeavour used to be able to fund itself in its heyday, if you like, when bingo was flourishing and when its art unions were flourishing. We all supported things like the Endeavour rally, the various beauty contests and bar attendant contests that it held and so forth—all of the things that it has done over the years.

However, the introduction of poker machines in the nineties hit so many organisations that relied on fundraising hard. People looked for instant money through Keno, poker machines and so forth while the bingo halls of our state virtually collapsed. That was part of the reason. We have to be responsible in the provision of government funds. It is a sound idea to have a business plan to ensure that government money will be well spent, but we have to ensure that we look after the people, and that is what the National Party is calling for tonight.

I was going to speak about the farm in Toowoomba and the nursery in Toowoomba. My other colleagues from the downs will speak about those because I have run out of time. But I want to make this point in this debate tonight: the federal government is providing some funds for the transition period. The

minister has been helpful to me. I went to see him personally and he wrote to Kay Patterson. He was very helpful in trying to assist us in that process. It is something that we have to work on together to look after these people and these families. All we are asking—and I want to keep it simple—is that we recognise what Endeavour has gone through and recognise the wonderful philosophies of all of its boards around the different regional centres, its volunteers and the staff who put in many hours of unpaid work. Let us look after these families. It is something that this state has to do.

Time expired.