



Speech by

John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Thursday, 29 September 2005

GOLD COAST PROJECT FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (9.39 pm): There is a German proverb that proclaims charity sees the need, not the cause. On 22 September I was very pleased to attend the annual general meeting of the Gold Coast Project for Homeless Youth.

Mr Lawlor: I saw you there.

Mr LANGBROEK: The member for Southport was there, which shows the bipartisanship of the parliament when it comes to issues like homelessness. We realise that in the difficult world in which we live and with changing circumstances with regard to mental health, drug and alcohol issues, many people are successful in society and many people are not. The Gold Coast Project for Homeless Youth has been going for 20 years now and receives from the Department of Communities recurrent funding of \$596,000, which I know they are very thankful for. Obviously, they need to work constantly to maintain their funding.

There were not just five people at this meeting; there were about 30. I think the member for Southport and I both agreed that it is wonderful to go to meetings like this to see a real collection of people—not just a few people begging for money, because we all know we get lots of people saying they need money for this or that. This organisation had 30 people there; some really keen volunteers. It is wonderful to see. They are pioneers of this method of housing. They have two houses. One is called Lawson House, and it is named after a volunteer, Pru Lawson, and another one is called Bannister House. Bannister House is a long-term stay. It is a supportive environment where young people who are assessed as reasonably stable are able to pursue their education and/or employment goals. Lawson House is a short-term stay. The important thing is that only two per cent of residents entering this service have left to stay on the streets. The other 98 per cent were assisted in finding other accommodation, with 21 per cent actually returning to family. They are both very good facilities. The return rate of 21 per cent returning to families is a wonderful statistic and a credit to them.

It is sad, though, that at least an average of two people are turned away every day, such is the need on the Gold Coast. I encourage all members of this House to think of ways to open more of these facilities and to support existing ones to meet the very real need that is out there in the community. I would like to especially commend Dr Bill Hoyer, who is the chairperson of this group that has been going for 20 years. I attended their 20-year celebration, and it was a celebration. We heard testimonials from people who have been in these houses who made mention of how it has turned their life around.

It is a wonderful organisation. I have been a strong advocate for the role and voice of those affected by mental illness and their families. As the incidence of drug addiction rises in our community, it is inevitable that there will be a correlation to arise in the number of people affected by mental illness. As a result, the resources of the project for homeless youth will be stretched to the limit. I urge the government to continue to support the project to help them help those who society has, on some occasions, let fall through the crack. Once again, I congratulate the project. They can count on my support in the future.