



Speech by

Mark McArdle

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

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CALOUNDRA, DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES

Mr McARDLE (Caloundra—Lib) (10.21 pm): To a large extent, Caloundra is dependent upon state government services being provided from Maroochydore. In days gone by, that may well have served the needs of both regions but clearly in today's modern era that is no longer the case. There are very strong arguments that the population explosion in Caloundra, which is a growing city, and the Maroochy shire—which are the fastest growing areas on the Sunshine Coast—will require additional services to be put in place to cater for the needs of these areas individually. I acknowledge this will not happen overnight, but we must commence planning for it immediately.

The current cost of petrol, which shows no sign of abating, makes it extremely difficult for many people to travel from Caloundra to Maroochydore in their own vehicle. The public transport system is also not able to cater for the numbers, and the time spent travelling between the two regions is significant. As a consequence, if we could focus on not just the immediate needs but the needs for the long-term future, I would suggest a number of departments should have offices based in Caloundra within the near future. Certainly, there should be a department of community services presence, which could provide funding for a range of services, including domestic violence matters encompassing counselling and ancillary services.

In addition, the Department of Housing needs a presence on a full-time basis in Caloundra. There are significant numbers of people waiting for public housing in Caloundra, and that figure is more likely to increase than decrease. Making an office available in Caloundra would be of enormous benefit to people seeking the assistance of the department. Being on the ground and having local knowledge is invaluable. Additionally, there is an argument for Disability Services to have a permanent presence in the city. Again, based upon population increases, there is a need for those who are disabled and for carers thereof to be able to access services, information and people on the ground in the city of Caloundra.

As I said at the start, this is a process that cannot happen overnight, but it is certainly a process that needs to start sooner rather than later. The pressures put on government departments 10 years ago cannot compare with what exists today. We all understand that. We also understand that the people we represent are looking for answers and solutions quicker today than they were 10 years ago. The departments, therefore, need to look at how to provide a quicker, more efficient and more cost-effective service. Certainly, initial outlays may be significant; however, in the long term, the savings will also be significant.

I request that the ministers for the various portfolios consider the proposal of relevant departmental offices being placed in Caloundra city. The obvious spin-off is a benefit to the economy as more people—including younger people—are likely to move with these departmental offices, thus assisting in the process of rejuvenating the economy.