



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Thursday, 30 March 2006

WELCOME CREEK, ST JOHN'S AMBULANCE

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.25 pm): Along with the member for Bundaberg I, too, would like to pass along my respects and say congratulations to Allan Davis and Aaron Kemps, cyclists from Bundaberg-Burnett. Aaron's grandad, Gerry Kemps, was one of Patel's victims. I know that Aaron's grandma gained a lot of joy and pleasure following Aaron's cycling career.

The community of Welcome Creek in my electorate are furious and extremely distressed at the moment. They may lose their much-loved hall, the St John's Ambulance Community Hall, as St John's Ambulance Queensland executive plans to sell the hall in order to renovate the Bundaberg branch. The hall has been a community treasure for over 40 years and has seen many of the local children complete cadetships there. What makes the hall so special to the community is that they have been involved right from the very beginning, from purchasing and maintaining the hall to raising funds for expansions. I am told that the land for the purpose of building the hall was donated by Mr George 'Squatter' Smith in 1960. The hall itself was purchased and transported to the present site by the Welcome Creek community and parents. These people raised their own funds to help maintain the hall and, by all rights, it is the community's hall.

On 24 March I wrote a letter to the state Governor, Quentin Bryce, asking in her capacity as patron of the St John's Ambulance executive to intervene on behalf of the Burnett shire residents and ask that the St John's committee reconsider its decision, and I repeat that call tonight.

Leanne Ciprian, a resident of Welcome Creek, does not want the hall to be sold—in common with a lot of other community members. She and her community constantly fundraise and accept donations to pay for all of the hall's accounts—the rates, phone, electricity et cetera. The community of Welcome Creek also tell me that they were in the middle of organising a cent sale over Easter to fundraise for the hall, but that has had to be cancelled due to the uncertainty of the hall's future. They are very unhappy with St John's state CEO, Mr Carey. They are very unhappy with his attitude and also the advice that he is giving to his executive, as is the Burnett Shire Council, especially Deputy Mayor Maurice Chapman, who is vehemently opposed to the sale. I have spoken a number of times with Maurice. He is even thinking of organising a legal challenge. He is willing to explore any option. Leanne Ciprian says—

The CEO of St John (as in Mr Carey) didn't stand out in the boiling, hot sun for hours fundraising, nor did he perform duties at community events.

On behalf of the community of Welcome Creek, I call on the St John's Ambulance Queensland to reconsider its decision to sell off the hall and let the community continue to enjoy the use of their hall.