



Speech by

## Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2007

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### GLADSTONE ELECTORATE, HEALTH CONCERNS

**Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (10.19 pm): Recently, a constituent who lives north of my electorate wrote to me with these comments—

I'm writing to you in regards to my own concerns in relation to the Pollution Levels in the Gladstone region. When Birds of Prey start coming in sick and or showing signs of Heavy Metals particularly from a particular area then I feel I have a duty of care to inform the person representing the public in that area. Birds of prey are considered to be at the very top of the food chain, so when they are being affected by toxic chemicals, then at our level things are really bad.

...

It is my understanding that I'm the only licensed Raptor Rehabilitator ... in the entire central Queensland region. Injured sick and orphaned Birds of Prey come to me from as far away as Longreach, Gladstone, Central Highlands, Rockhampton, and the Capricorn Coast. I have been a volunteer rehabilitator of these birds for over seventeen years. I'm registered with the QPWS.

...

Compared to Birds of Prey which I received from all other areas the success rate of rehabilitating birds from Gladstone is extremely poor.

This lady goes on to give an example of a bird that was sent into her care recently. She says—

The x-ray revealed that the bird had heavy metals in its body.

Those heavy metals are shown on the X-rays as white dots. This lady goes on to give the story of that particular bird and its origins. Then she says—

I would like to see someone take up the challenge and not sweep the information which I have provided under the carpet.

Recently, the government set up a two-year health study for the Gladstone region based on some health issues that were raised in this chamber and also quite strenuously by members of the community. The concern is that there are three layers of this health study: the overarching committee, the industry committee and a committee with community and government representation.

I have spoken to a representative from the industry committee on a number of occasions. That representative wants one committee that will deal with all the information, make information public and make the report relevant. However, the government representatives have joined together, including the minister, and have held the view that there should be these three committees. Ironically, the members of the community who are on their particular committee have been sworn to secrecy. They cannot discuss with anyone anything that they find out.

The problem is that my community wants this study to be definitive. They want it to be effective and they want it to genuinely lay to rest the concerns in the community. When you get correspondence such as this letter from this lady, who has a proven track record in her care and in her abilities, the sort of secrecy that seems to be shrouding these committees that have been set up does not augur well for a future where the report will have credibility, openness and transparency and will carry with it not only the confidence of the community but also the confidence of those who are members of the committees. Again, I ask the government for openness and transparency, not secrecy.