




Speech by

Dr Alex Douglas

MEMBER FOR GAVEN

Hansard Wednesday, 6 April 2011

GOLD COAST, NEW ZEALAND AND PACIFIC ISLAND COMMUNITIES

 **Dr DOUGLAS** (Gaven—LNP) (11.54 am): I wish to highlight issues facing New Zealand and Pacific Island communities on the Gold Coast. We ignore this rapidly emerging problem at our own risk. Those groups are continuing to immigrate to the northern Gold Coast in massive numbers. Fifty per cent of all new school admissions to our hinterland state primary and secondary schools are either white or pakeha New Zealanders, Maoris or Pacific Islanders. Upper Coomera State College has an enrolment of 2,600 students. Of its latest enrolments, 73 per cent are Maoris or Pacific Islanders. Thirty-eight per cent of students, that is, 988 students, are from Maori or Pacific Islander background. That equates to potentially 500-plus families. Currently, we are using cultural councillors to stop unacceptable behaviour that promotes bullying, gang behaviour and poor school performance. There have been significant problems. It is working well and it must continue.

Mr Moorhead interjected.

Dr DOUGLAS: Excuse me; the member has had his chance. Two councillors share the role at Nerang State High School, Southport State High School, Keebra Park State High School, Upper Coomera State College and Coombabah State High School. All of those schools have very large numbers of students who are Maoris or Pacific Islanders. With no access to HECS, most do not bother to pursue an OP, but do want to go to TAFE. I ask the minister to reconsider the decision to stop funding those positions as they are vital to the communities.

I highlight the plight of many New Zealanders on the Gold Coast, particularly youth, who are homeless and, as a result, have turned to petty and serious crime and unsolicited prostitution to support themselves. Those visa holders are being forced into poverty as they are ineligible for Centrelink and pensions other than the family tax benefit, assisted or emergency housing, HECS, assisted job search or access to disability services. So bad is the situation that the Nerang Neighbourhood Centre is seeking funding for a research project to detail the issue of non-protected visa holders from New Zealand. The centre wants the report distributed in New Zealand so that future migrants are fully informed of their rights and responsibilities before uprooting themselves and their families. It appears that they have been completely misinformed about their welfare eligibility and rights to social security before coming to our country.