




Speech by
Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Tuesday, 10 July 2012

ROCKHAMPTON, OZANAM HOUSE

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (10.02 pm): On Saturday, 30 June I was privileged to attend the 50th anniversary celebration of Ozanam House Ozcare men's hostel in Rockhampton. I particularly want to thank Peter Camden, Glenn Thompson and the Vicar General, Reverend John Grace, for the opportunity. The official ceremony and plaque unveiling were preceded by a celebration mass at Rockhampton's St Joseph's Cathedral. This cathedral is one of the finest in Queensland and it is coming to the end of a very significant restoration program. It is in the Gothic style and, quite aside from its religious significance, the building is an architectural and cultural heritage treasure.

The Catholic diocese of Rockhampton, led by Bishop Brian Heenan, deserves public recognition for this fantastic restoration project. It was of course the Catholic Church and the St Vincent de Paul Society that led the creation of Ozanam House, which opened on 3 June 1962 and which for five decades has provided care for the most needy in our Central Queensland community. The hostel assists clients achieve self-reliance and independence by addressing homelessness with short-term crisis accommodation, meals, encouragement towards independent living through case management, referrals, advocacy and information in addition to vocational support programs and access to health services including the Ozcare nursing staff and allied health services.

In 2011 Ozanam House provided 4,497 bed nights for those who could not find comfort or shelter. This represented a 71 per cent occupancy rate. So far in 2012 the occupancy rate is tracking at 75 per cent. This is testament to the fact that demand for low-income accommodation is increasing dramatically in Rockhampton, especially as the nearby regional centres become more expensive. It is also symptomatic of the growing social divide evident in our communities. This increasing demand is placing the not-for-profit sector under considerable stress.

Ozcare men's hostel received \$658,000 per annum in recurrent funding under a three-year program from the department of communities's homeless and housing section. This has been essential to the provision of short-term crisis accommodation and support and meals for men aged over 18 years for a considerable period. In a perfect world there would no longer be a need for such services. In the meantime, I must express my admiration for the 50 years of tireless support to the most needy in Central Queensland by the St Vincent de Paul Society and the staff of Ozanam House and Ozcare men's hostel. They can be assured of my strong support now and for as long as its services are required.