




Speech by

Jo-Ann Miller

MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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WESTFALEN COMMUNITY GARDENS

 **Mrs MILLER** (Bundamba—ALP) (11.42 pm): Within the Bundamba electorate a great bunch of people are getting their hands dirty, and they love it! The Westfalen Community Gardens was started in 2005 with a grant of \$250,000 from the department of health and it has been going great guns ever since. Located at Dunlop Street in Collingwood Park, it utilises the old Westfalen mine site and has plots of land available for members of the community to grow fruit and vegetables.

The benefits to those who have plots are great. Not only do they get access to cheap, fresh food prepared by themselves; they get to socialise with other community members who share the same interests. For some like dedicated committee members Lingi and family, Filip Luafutu and family, Uncle John and family and Graham and Gillian Lynn, it is a large part of their life. It brings health benefits of being outdoors and a little exercise, fresh produce and socialising with like-minded people. Apart from fruit and vegetables that they grow, there are also chickens providing fresh free-range eggs which are sold to the community to help with the gardens. It is also a great way of bringing the many different cultural groups in the Ipswich region together to share information about growing and preparing fruit and vegetables and creating new recipes and living healthy lifestyles.

Currently, Challenge Employment and Training is seeking to implement a new arrangement with the lease, with very little consultation with Westfalen Community Gardens Inc. I have many concerns over this new lease proposal and the impact this may have on the community garden's viability and its ability to operate and also the high-handed approach that Challenge has pursued, which is basically, 'Sign it or get out!' In my view it is unconscionable conduct. I want to encourage Challenge Employment and Training to open a longer dialogue with the gardens so more negotiations can be undertaken. I want it to lengthen the period of negotiation so that the new CEO, and in fact the Challenge Employment and Training board, can fully understand the role and the impact that the community gardens have in our community. I want it to be fair and negotiate an outcome which facilitates its needs but also allows the gardens to operate in a way which is sustainable. I have concerns that the agreement it seeks does not allow that to happen and that without compromise the future of the gardens will be deliberately put at risk.

Our local community will not stand for Challenge Employment and Training lording it over the Westfalen Community Gardens Inc. Groups like Anglicare which receive boxes and boxes of produce every week will not stand for it either, and neither will I as state MP for Bundamba. I call on Challenge Employment and Training to hold meaningful negotiations with Westfalen Community Gardens Inc. It needs to settle this matter ASAP. It is absolutely shameful that it is going down this path, because taking food out of the mouths of families and schoolkids like those at the Goodna Special School, which relies on growing its own spuds, pumpkins, tomatoes et cetera, is nothing short of shameful.