




Speech By
Julieanne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST

Endeavour Foundation Workshop; Housing for the Disabled

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (11.52 am): Recently I had the opportunity to visit the Endeavour Foundation's workshop facility in Mackay to witness firsthand the brilliant outcomes being achieved. Fifty-nine local people living with disabilities are employed at the workshop. Their work varies from applying eyelets and twine to tags supplied to the mining industry and constructing pallets and crates through to inventory control technology, packaging and the retail of safety products. While touring the workshop and speaking with the workers, I saw a level of productivity and standard of both operations and product that would be the envy of any workplace. Those opportunities are made possible through the hard work and tireless dedication of the Endeavour Foundation staff and volunteers. At present, the foundation employs 10 staff at the Mackay facility who are supported by regular volunteers and 59 disabled workers. At the conclusion of my visit, I gained a genuine sense of the great work that was being done at the workshop and I was inspired by the possibilities that lay ahead—enormous and exciting possibilities to grow business, to generate income, to provide training and education, and, perhaps most importantly, to improve the quality of lives of some of the most courageous, hardworking, willing and yet vulnerable people in our community.

Unfortunately, there is one other pressing issue facing some disabled people in Mackay, which is the issue of housing. It is a real hurdle to find suitable accommodation when living at home is no longer an option. I will tell the House about Johnny, a neighbour of mine who is a supported worker at the Endeavour Foundation workshop. He has had an intellectual disability since birth. For many years his father has been trying to get Johnny a placement in supported group accommodation. Johnny wants to live independently from his father. He will need support with meals and the general organisation of his day, for example, choosing what to wear and help with crossing roads, and also assistance with finance. In recent years his father, Neil, has not been in the best of health and is concerned that he will not find a placement before he is no longer able to take care of Johnny. After a number of years the only placement offered is a four-day-a-week living arrangement in Bowen. At best, Bowen is a two-hour drive from Mackay. I do not know where Johnny is supposed to live for the other three days of week and he would also need to give up his employment with the Endeavour Foundation, from which he gets so much pleasure.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing elderly parents with greater certainty about where their adult children with disabilities will live when they can no longer care for them. I have heard firsthand from many families in Mackay that there is a chronic housing shortfall for people with disabilities. I know that my parliamentary colleagues the Minister for Disability Services and the Minister for Housing have written to the federal government and Minister Fifield to raise concerns about the severe shortage of housing for people with disabilities so that we can come up with options for elderly parents of adult children with disabilities, as well as options for young adults with disabilities who want independence. Those elderly parents want to know that their children are going to be cared for when they pass.

The Abbott government, like the state LNP, is threatening the true intent of the NDIS by failing to assure Queensland and the rest of the states and territories that it will address critical housing concerns. The federal LNP budget failed to address the chronic housing shortage for people with disabilities. The sad reality is that \$700 million per year from the DisabilityCare fund—the extra Medicare levy for NDIS—was earmarked to be spent on disability housing, but the Abbott government will not say if or when it will be released. Can members imagine the growth in the construction industry with that type of investment and the possibilities of public-private partnerships? It would create thousands of jobs and benefit the broader Queensland community.

(Time expired)