




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR GYMPIE

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ADJOURNMENT

Gympie Electorate, Youth Forum

 **Mr PERRETT** (Gympie—LNP) (11.21 pm): Late in June I hosted a youth forum with input from Gympie's representative to the Queensland Youth Parliament, Sophie Ellaby. Student representatives from every secondary school across the region gathered to discuss the issues facing our youth, including tertiary opportunities and unemployment. This group did not plead for more entertainment venues. They had their eyes on the future of Gympie's growth, on keeping actively engaged in employment and on study opportunities and community activities in the region.

Naturally, the level of youth unemployment worries them. They are concerned that policies and decisions made in Brisbane do not help to create long-term employment opportunities in regions like Gympie. Several representatives identified it as one of the major factors pushing local youth to leave the region. This is exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to study to gain qualifications. The limited university and TAFE opportunities in Gympie mean that if a student cannot afford to move away they are being denied the chance to pursue a tertiary education.

I cannot stress how deeply this worries them, with many feeling the burden that this alone could have a significant impact on their job expectations. What makes this even more shameful is that the state government is deliberately preventing the University of the Sunshine Coast from expanding its presence at the Gympie education precinct. It is contemptible that out of sheer bloody-mindedness the Minister for Training is refusing to allow the University of the Sunshine Coast to access an empty and unused TAFE building at the site so it can expand its courses and offer more places for enrolment. What compounds this is that TAFE has said that it does not even need the building, which sits across a car park from the University of the Sunshine Coast. In fact, in December last year TAFE closed nursing studies at the Gympie campus which was being used as a pathway course for students who were then able to transition into a bachelor degree at the University of the Sunshine Coast.

Students have been missing out since last year, and it looks like 2017 will be a missed opportunity again. These actions are not just unthinking; they are actually hurting the hopes and aspirations of our youth. Not surprisingly to those who know the region, many students called for more agriculture focused courses to be introduced at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Gympie campus. As an encouraging sign for the future, representatives suggested engaging with volunteer organisations to complement the ageing demographics of volunteers and to take advantage of the Bruce Highway upgrade to attract more tourists and market secret destinations which even some locals do not know about. I thank everyone who attended because the feedback has been invaluable in helping to provide an insight into the needs of Gympie's youth.