




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Burdekin Electorate, PCYC

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.11 pm): Just over three years ago, I stood in this House to speak of the amazing achievements of boxers from the Burdekin PCYC. I spoke about Emma Lawson who had won her division at the Australian titles, won gold at the Oceania championships, earned a spot in the Australian team at the youth world championships and was selected to participate in the Road to Buenos Aires camp, a pathway to the Summer Youth Olympic Games. I spoke about Damon Pitcher who had claimed his division at the Australian championships, had won gold at the North Queensland Games after stepping up an age division and had secured selection in the Boxing Queensland Development Squad.

I spoke about Alex 'Chook' Lawson, Emma and Damon's coach, and the small group of dedicated volunteers, including Russell Dingle, who travel thousands of kilometres each year to help these young people achieve their goals. I spoke of the pride that our community felt and how Emma, Damon and other boxers from the Burdekin PCYC were role models for our youth. It was not just the Burdekin community that was proud. Chook and some of his students were featured in last year's PCYC annual report.

That sense of pride and those role models are now gone. After 26 years as a volunteer coach of boxers of all levels, Chook has hung up his gloves—and not by his own choosing. The Burdekin and our youth have been let down by the PCYC, not at a local level where staff go above and beyond their duty and where volunteers are constantly fundraising. They have been let down by the head office in Brisbane. It is a disgrace that, when youth throughout Queensland are losing their way and are stealing cars and breaking into houses, the hierarchy of the PCYC are standing by, at best, and watching centres close and programs diminish.

The fact is that Queensland taxpayers cover a substantial portion of the costs of our PCYCs via the provision of police officers. Both the police minister and the Minister for Youth Justice should be asking questions. The contribution by taxpayers to these centres is an investment in the safety of our communities and the future of our youth across the state, regardless of whether they live in the city or in smaller centres like the Burdekin. It is certainly my fear that the PCYC have lost their way over the years and have now become money driven ventures at the expense of programs like boxing. I say thank you to Chook and all of the volunteers involved with the Burdekin PCYC boxing program.