



Speech By  
**Hon. Michael Healy**


**MEMBER FOR CAIRNS**

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**MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Cairns Youth Foyer**

 **Hon. MP HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (Minister for Tourism and Sport) (2.30 pm): I am very happy to rise to talk about youth foyers. We know that youth foyers are a very important part of our plans to build a better future for Queenslanders as opposed to those opposite who have no commitments, no obligations, no plans and no idea. Earlier this year, the Queensland government announced a commitment under the Homes for Queenslanders plan. I am very pleased that the minister is here because she has been tolerant as we have had full-ranging discussions. The Alliance of Social Services in Cairns has been asking for a youth foyer for a long time. This is another example of the Miles government listening to people in the community and responding. When we look at all the challenges that the community faces, we know that one of the most important things we can do is give young men and women an opportunity to live in a place where they can grow and make a better life for themselves.

Under the Homes for Queenslanders plan, the goal is to deliver eight youth foyers across the state to assist young Queenslanders at risk of homelessness—the first in Cairns and then Hervey Bay and Moreton Bay. It is proposed that the Cairns youth foyer will be built in Manoora where there is a high demand for independent and supported housing. The youth foyer will provide 40 self-contained units for young people aged between 16 and 25 years. I was delighted to be accompanied by the minister recently to look at the site.

I cannot understate the importance of having a youth foyer in Cairns and the difference it will make for young people who are looking for a fresh start and support. These are real initiatives that are absolutely fundamental to building a better life for those young kids. Cairns was identified as a location for a youth foyer due to the high demand for independent and supportive housing for young people. It will be the fourth youth foyer to be developed by the department of housing, with established youth foyers operating already in Logan and the Gold Coast and a third currently under construction in Townsville.

To date, the operating youth foyers have assisted more than 200 vulnerable young people. Youth foyers provide accommodation for young people who are committed to engaging in education, training and work or who are in need of a safe and stable environment in which to live as they build their future as adults. Youth foyers are staffed by experienced youth support workers, with the model ensuring that staff are onsite 24/7. Having staff available over 24 hours gives young tenants security and ensures that they have onsite support when it is needed.

There are several reasons young people may come to live in a youth foyer. Many of them need to escape home due to conflict or family violence. Some experience overcrowding in the family home. Sometimes working or studying can be a little challenging. It is important that we provide safe places. For children leaving the safety of the system when they turn 18 years of age, a youth foyer can provide a safe house where they can learn and develop independent living skills and establish a good rental history before securing a mainstream property. This is where foyers serve a vitally important purpose.

In this place we hear about many topics and this is one in a range of important issues that the government continues to invest in. We need to make sure that those at risk of homelessness are provided with better opportunities and this is part of our investment into that. Youth foyers fill a gap. They prevent young people from becoming homeless adults. They help educate and upskill and, more importantly, they help prepare young people for real world experiences and they fill a gap, making them a little less vulnerable to the challenges in the community.

To be eligible for accommodation at a youth foyer, young people need to be enrolled in education or training or be employed. Tenants are required to shop and cook for themselves. They learn about their rights and responsibilities and they learn respect for others while living in shared accommodation. This is an outstanding, ongoing and well-funded initiative. I commend the minister and I recognise the hard work of the government. A huge amount has gone into this. The average stay is 18 months, but it depends on each tenant's circumstances and their plan to complete their education. This is about investing in our youth where the real future is.