



Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**


**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### BUSHkids

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.00 pm): Tonight I want to raise awareness of the great work of the Royal Queensland Bush Children's Health Scheme known as BUSHkids. BUSHkids is a not-for-profit organisation which continues to support the health and wellbeing of children and families across Queensland's remote and rural communities, and they have been doing this for 89 years. In 2023, BUSHkids supported 8,278 Queensland children. This leads me to remind all members that, wherever we are next year, we should turn our attention to ensure their 90 years celebration is appropriately acknowledged. One thing we could do is guarantee adequate base funding to ensure their important work continues and expands.

BUSHkids specialises in providing free preventive and early intervention allied health care. This supports children and families who, through unavailability or due to costs, are unable to access services where they live. We know it is incredibly tough for children who are at risk of poor health, and that can flow through to educational and social problems for children and families, meaning they will struggle to reach their full potential. BUSHkids provides free therapy services to improve speech, behaviour, resilience and everyday activities. Services are currently provided through five regional service centres in Bundaberg, Dalby, Emerald, Mount Isa and Warwick. These centres have terrific staff comprising speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, psychologists and family health support workers. Other rural communities that are supported from smaller satellite sites include Inglewood, Stanthorpe, Agnes Water, Miriam Vale and Kingaroy, all staffed by early intervention facilitators.

I want to acknowledge the advocacy of BUSHkids CEO Carlton Meyn, Director of Clinical Services Strategy Susan Harrison and members of the board. I will single out Judy Peters OAM, who became a member in 2018 having been involved with the Friends of BUSHkids for a number of years. Friends of BUSHkids Bundaberg has grown since participation in Agrotrend in 2022 and the Bundaberg Show with fruit and vegetable displays.

Thanks also goes to the Friends of BUSHkids member Scott Lamond from our local ABC who has been instrumental in working with the Early Childhood Approach team in connecting with Queensland Cricket and cricket associations, building community capacity across service areas. We must do more to support BUSHkids' work with children living in regional, rural and remote locations across Queensland. These are families and children who are disproportionately disadvantaged.

I want to acknowledge the work of BUSHkids in Cherbourg and Cunnamulla in striving to meet the Closing the Gap targets. They are doing some really good work. These early intervention programs are extremely important. They interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. BUSHkids are uniquely placed to continue the good work in Queensland and a shout-out goes to them, with a reminder that next year sees 90 years of their service to Queensland. We congratulate them for their service.