

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Fadden Electorate: Communities

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (9.54 a.m.)—I rise to urge the Rudd Labor government to continue to fund the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy post June 2009, when the funding ceases after five remarkable and successful years. The negative impact of the program's cessation on the northern Gold Coast seat of Fadden should not be underestimated. This strategy has been highly successful, and I call on the Rudd government to announce a renewal of the program no later than Christmas this year, just as the Howard government had promised to do.

On Monday, I met with Margaret Spriggs, based in the Oxenford and Coomera Community Youth Centre, a centre that enjoys my full and complete support. Margaret is the coordinator of the Northern Gold Coast Communities for Children Initiative, or C4C, a program currently funded by the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. C4C focuses on developing and delivering education, support, a strong family unit and, most importantly, healthy fun for parents and their children. C4C offers initiatives in a safe environment for over 1,500 northern Gold Coast families every week. Projects cater for everyone in the community, from infants to older members. The program includes five early-year hubs, which are attended by over 700 families every week; mobile community centres that work to deliver activities in areas with no community centres; active and healthy childcare activities for 500 parents and children; a read and grow program; and Ready Set Learn.

C4C programs and many like them around the country help to hold our social and community fabric together, and it is outrageous to think that the Northern Gold Coast Communities for Children Initiative may be destroyed in June next year because of the dud Labor government's inability to continue to fund it. The current funding allows the Northern Gold Coast C4C to develop programs specifically tailored to develop and assist families and youth who have no community stimulation. The Howard government promised to renew the program for another four years. To date, there has been no indication of that from the dud government and there is nothing in the forward estimates.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER—The member for Fadden will stop that.

Mr ROBERT—Statistically, the Gold Coast has some of the highest negative national social indicators for child abuse and neglect, domestic violence and drug and alcohol abuse and has an acute abundance of families and individuals who suffer from extreme hardship and are socially disconnected from any form of family and friends. C4C has undoubtedly improved the social network and infrastructure of the northern Gold Coast. The program, its community development workers and the families whose lives it has enriched need assurance that this government cares about the social fabric that links the community and that this government sees the invaluable benefits to the community and will continue to fund the program. I take my hat off to Margaret Spriggs and her team of development workers, who go into the community every day. Margaret, I thank you, and the over 1,500 families you touch every week thank you. I implore the Rudd government to show that it understands by reinvesting in the program.