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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

GRIEVANCE DEBATE

Multiculturalism

SPEECH

Monday, 18 October 2010

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Page 648
Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (9.10 pm)—The speech of the member for Calwell on multiculturalism would be very well received by thousands of people across Victoria. I represent part of the Latrobe Valley and grew up in Koo Wee Rup with a diversity in ethnic groups in my schooling and with an appreciation of the importance of Greek associations, and I cannot help but think that the father of multiculturalism was Petro Georgiou, who was such a leader in the Fraser years for multiculturalism and SBS television—I could go on for ages. I am going to talk about him tomorrow. We do have a proud legacy, as the speech of the member for Calwell points out. I do not think your own people will return to you what you are expecting of them. I do not think they have the intestinal fortitude to do that in the current circumstances, and that should be a disappointment to the whole of the nation. I will not talk about my own side. I like to be in the moment, and that is why I wanted to respond to the address.

Today, Mary MacKillop, if you are Catholic, is also in the moment. The great legacy of Mary MacKillop is an intrinsically Australian one. It is a tapestry of inspiration sewn together with the steel needle of resilience and the binding thread of compassion. Mary's life story lights a spiritual beacon of hope for so many Australians, especially to many in my electorate of McMillan. I am not Catholic myself, but the Carmody family are a Catholic family and they are from Leongatha and have Mary's legacy threaded deep in the fabric of each of their lives. Australia's first saint is the reason Ed Carmody moved his family to Leongatha to establish Mary MacKillop College in 1986. In developing the school, Ed Carmody learned much about the life of Mary MacKillop and has followed her beatification and the process towards canonisation ever since. His wife, Jill, was educated by the Sisters of St Josephine in South Australia. Now running a successful travel business in Leongatha, Jill is leading a 15-day pilgrimage of Gippslanders to Rome and is also joined by their daughters Renae Littlejohn and Jacinta Johnston. I saw a photo of these two girls standing in front of Kevin Rudd in Rome. That will be in the Leongatha paper next week. I am sure Mr Rudd is looking forward to being on the front page of the Leongatha paper.

Renae is a talented artist, businesswoman and community leader in South Gippsland. In a text message to a friend at home, Renae wanted me to say that this is the experience of a lifetime for the Carmody family. Renae wrote that for her and her sister Jacinta:

Mary's words that 'we are all but travellers here' encourages us to take opportunities everyday of our lives.

Renae and Jacinta's text message read on:

Mary MacKillop's resilience to hardship and change help us to focus on accepting life's challenges, as Australian women, through the power of prayer and meditation.

These two talented Gippsland women add:

... we can focus on creating a better life for ourselves and those around us.

To Renae Littlejohn and her family, this is the true meaning of Mary MacKillop's legacy. I wish the Carmody family all the best for their trip. They have obviously been deeply inspired by their journey already, as they lead a pilgrimage of Gippslanders on behalf of all Australians. Here's to the Carmody family.

In our nation we had our government stand up and say to our state governments, 'If you don't fix your hospitals, we are going to come in and ruthlessly rip the management of them off you, pay for 60 per cent of them and fix every hospital problem in Australia.' Mr Deputy Speaker, you are in an area that is growing like wildfire and so am I in the outer reaches of Melbourne. The growth is explosive and it is driving itself out past Pakenham all the way out to Moe and Newborough, right along a corridor. In the old days we had bush nursing hospitals at Bunyip, Koo Wee Rup, Pakenham and Berwick. They all had a hospital, as did Neerim South and Korumburra. Now they have closed all of them down; we do not have those hospitals anymore. We have Casey Hospital, but they will only take certain patients, because they are a bit busy now. We have a hospital out at Warragul that has 87,000 visits a year. They come from Moe in the east towards Warragul. They come from the south towards

Warragul for the specialists. They come from Pakenham towards Warragul for clinical care and to have their babies. And they come a short way from the north on this side of the hills.

I need to mount an argument. I am not a person who abandons states rights. The Western Australian sitting beside me knows all about states rights, because you have wanted to secede a couple of times, haven't you? It would not surprise me if you tried again. Importantly, I do not like to cross what a state government has done or what they have planned to do or how they run their operations. I think it is wrong. I think we should invest in the states and have them make the decisions at the lower levels. You do not want a politician like Russell Broadbent coming along and saying: 'Because I have hospitals in Warragul, Leongatha, Wonthaggi and Latrobe, which is just out of my electorate, I need all the money for hospitals and health care for the whole of Victoria to come to my area. I am in a marginal seat and I have decided that is what I want.' I think that is totally inappropriate.

I think the bureaucrats working in the Victorian state government over the years have worked out a plan for the region of Gippsland and I think their plan is probably slightly contrary to what the locals believe they should have in their local area. Koo Wee Rup would love their hospital back. Bunyip would like their hospital back. Pakenham would like their hospital back. Neerim South would like their old hospital back. It is not going to happen unless in years to come they form part of the great metropolis of Melbourne and the area is more like the seat of Calwell than the seat of McMillan. There may be hospitals that close if that happens, but right now I have to mount an argument that I can put to the bureaucrats and to the state government that says: because of the explosive growth in this region, Warragul is the natural home to rebuild that hospital.

I am not sure that I have got these figures right, because I have not read the speech that was prepared for me, but it will give you the message. To rebuild the old hospital piece by piece over the next 20 years is going to cost \$297 million. To finish with it and move to a new site is going to cost \$243 million. The Independent from Tasmania stood up and said, 'I'll have a billion dollars for my hospital thank you very much, nation,' but when he was offered it he said, 'I don't really want that; I only want \$300 or \$400 or \$500 million.' Well there is a hospital in Gippsland that needs to be completely rebuilt to service that region appropriately for the demands that are going to be put upon that hospital in the next 10 years.

There is only one way to go here in my opinion. The state government can give it \$5 million a year and \$2 million at the moment to put in some more beds in the emergency wards, and then another \$3 million when they are under pressure to put in another 20 beds in the emergency wards. In 20 years time I will not be here but there will be a member for McMillan who will stand up and say: 'You know what we really need? We need a new hospital at Warragul.' I am old enough now to have been there and I have actually seen that happen, seen the wheel turn right around. It is going to take some brave person to say so. I encourage all of the players that are involved in planning for health care across this nation, from the Gold Coast to Pakenham and from Western Australia to the seat of Calwell, to ensure that this money is allocated appropriately for the benefit of the nation, the state and the community. I would argue in that process that Warragul regional health care and the Warragul Hospital should be a priority for the Victorian state government regardless of marginal seats. It is an 8-year plan costing \$243 million and 60 per cent of that should come from the federal government.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Hon. Peter Slipper)—I thank the honourable member for McMillan. Before calling the member for Hindmarsh, I would refer the member for McMillan to the fact that I represent the Sunshine Coast and not the Gold Coast, where he holidays so often.