



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Connected Inc.

SPEECH

Thursday, 21 June 2012

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Prentice, Jane, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (09:48): Times are tough, and many people need help for many different reasons. However, not everyone requires long-term dependency. Some just need short-term support to get them back on their feet—a quick hand up, not a long-term handout. Too often, agencies are more interested in classifying people and filling in forms than actually assessing their real needs.

One volunteer organisation which is helping people who find themselves in hardship is Connected Inc. Connected was established by Craig Michaels one week after the January 2011 floods which devastated parts of the Ryan electorate and many areas of Queensland. Craig set up a disaster relief centre at the RNA Showgrounds at Bowen Hills, where essential items like toiletries, towels, clothes and sheets were provided at no cost for flood affected people. The centre was open for five weeks and supplies were constantly donated. Indeed there were truckloads, but then the showgrounds themselves were flooded and half of their stock was lost. So Connected found a new home, an industrial shed at Banyo—generously provided by the Dennis family. Connected has now extended its services to assist those affected by domestic violence, the homeless, single parents, youth at risk and anyone who finds themselves in genuine hardship.

Last week I had the opportunity to visit Connected at their Banyo warehouse with the LNP member for Nudgee, Jason Woodford, and local Councillor Kim Flessner. Despite the dilapidated surroundings, Connected has set up a layout better than many new age megastores and their impressive facility is packed with a wide variety of quality household items, furniture, clothes and food for people in need.

During our tour Craig introduced us to a family who had left New Zealand following the Christchurch earthquake. The family had lost everything. Thankfully, they found Connected in time and now that they are back on their feet once again the family are returning the favour by volunteering at Connected in their spare time.

Connected Inc are also part of the Australian Catholic University to establish a training program for the long-term unemployed. It is anticipated the program will match clients with education students at ACU for 10 days to learn skills to ensure they can access a job through Job Network Australia. As an added incentive, every client who stays in work for at least 14 weeks will be given a computer which has been donated to Connected.

However, in a sad turn of events, Connected may find themselves homeless in the coming months. Their current site will soon be redeveloped, leaving Craig and his team with the unenviable task of finding a new warehouse by September. Despite having identified a potential new site, Connected simply do not have the necessary funds to acquire the space. They have asked for support from the various levels of government but have so far been unsuccessful in obtaining any assistance.

Craig's plan is to make Connected Inc a nationally recognised charity to distribute free items and use other providers to distribute help. I certainly hope Connected will receive the assistance they require to continue their outstanding work in our community. I also continue to work closely with my state and local colleagues on this issue to provide my ongoing support to Connected's cause.