



GAWLER COMMUNITY HOUSE

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (15:45): Recently, I attended the annual general meeting of my local community house, which in my case is the Gawler Community House. The community house has been operating since 1981. I take this opportunity to inform the house of the activities of the Gawler Community House and the important role that it plays in the Gawler community.

While the community house receives some government funding it is essentially run by volunteers. The management committee, headed by the chairperson, Councillor Brian Thom, is comprised of volunteers and they are ably supported by the coordinator, Ms Jill Talbot. Jill has taken on this role quite recently, but has already made a positive impact on the activities of the community house.

The community house is a focus for a broad range of community events and activities. Like other community houses, the Gawler Community House's key objective is to build community through the programs, activities and events that it runs. This group of volunteers who run the community house do a stellar job in achieving that objective. I should also add that the work of these volunteers has been recognised in an Australia Day award for the town of Gawler, and in 2007 the community house won the Australia Day community group award.

Unashamedly, the community house has become a lighthouse for those in the community who, for whatever reason, have fallen on hard times. More importantly though, the house invests a lot of resources into building community capacity and helps rebuild the lives of some of its clients. The community house recently undertook a postcard campaign which gave people who had some association with the house an opportunity to write down what the community house meant to them.

I will now read into the record some of their comments, because I think it is more important that I let the volunteers and the clients of the community house speak for themselves. It also gives me an opportunity to reinforce how important the house is to the Gawler community. The first quote reads as follows:

I came to Gawler Community House as a client over 10 years ago. In the past 10 years I have volunteered, facilitated groups, been on the board of management and gained my Advanced Diploma of Community Services Management. All because of the Gawler Community House.

This quote from one of the volunteers at the house clearly indicates how the house has helped in two ways: one is to build community capacity, and by building skills in this particular individual. I have a second example of building skills:

I like to volunteer in the centre in the school holidays. Through my volunteer work I now have a real interest in community services and wish to pursue this as my career.

So, the house in this case has helped this person find a career direction in life. Another quote:

I volunteer here and make new friends. I am able to keep using skills I already have and learn new ones. Hopefully it is helping to keep my brain active! It is good to be able to help other people.

So, the house actually provides a venue to build friendships and also community connections. That is a common theme throughout these quotes, that the house provides an opportunity for people to connect with other members of the community.

I will also mention some activities that the house runs. For example, the house is about to facilitate a forum on housing and look at accommodation and housing for older people. Recently, the community house ran an Anti-Poverty Week event, again bringing people together to support those in our community

who have difficulties for whatever reason but also, importantly, to share the various experiences and things they have learnt at the house itself. The house also recently held an event called Every Generation, which I attended. They are also promoting a community urban garden, they own and operate an op shop, and they run counselling services and training courses. They are promoting the Christmas lunch and also planning for an urban orchard.

The community house, through various partnerships, contributes to the wellbeing of the community by working with other community groups—for example, the Gawler Refugee Association, the Gawler Community Services Forum and, more recently, the Fatherhood Project, which is designed to assist first time and young dads. As you can see, the community house is the core of community life in the town, and it is run by volunteers successfully.