

BRIGHTON COMMUNITY ECO-GARDEN
July 16, 2009

Ms FOX (Bright) (15:34): In September last year I had the privilege to attend a meeting with the Minister for Environment and Conservation, Mr Jay Weatherill, and a constituent of mine, Mr Michael Dwyer. Michael Dwyer and another person came into the parliament to discuss with us some problems around sustainable transport and peak oil. At the end of that discussion, when Michael Dwyer was leaving, he and I stopped and had a chat. We talked about the grassroots activities that could take place in our electorate that would get people more involved with the ecological reality of today's world and we also talked about wanting to establish a community garden. It was a very casual chat, and I said, 'Look, you should go to the council and see if it will help you and, if it does, I will be 100 per cent behind you.'

It is less than a year later, and I am very proud to say that from that meeting and from that chat a Brighton Community Eco-garden has finally been established. The first official meeting took place at the end of November last year and more than 70 people attended. That was 70 people just really in the Brighton and Hove areas who wanted to get involved in a community garden. What people wanted from a community garden was not only the opportunity to meet other people who enjoyed gardening and to share knowledge but also to be instructed and learn about what gardening was, because I think that, certainly, people of my generation (I am in my late 30s) have not grown up as gardeners. I see some country members looking at me in slight horror, and I will say that I am an urban member of parliament and—

The Hon. M.J. Atkinson: One could not be more innocently employed than in the garden.

Ms FOX: Indeed, Attorney. I am sure that you spend a great deal of time there. I am a very urban person, but I think it is very important for urban people such as myself to learn as much as they can about the process of food production and how food gets from the soil onto our plate.

We also had people who wanted to be part of a community garden because they wished to grow specific plants, they wanted to learn about specific activities such as composting and pruning and they wanted to be able to teach their children about gardening and how gardening can be a pleasure as well as a survival task.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Holdfast Bay city council, because if it had not been for the council this would not have been able to happen. I would particularly like to thank Glen Millar, the Manager of Community Development, for the support and for granting the use of the land at the southern end of the community centre on King George Avenue, Hove.

I have stated before in this place that I do not have particularly green fingers—no, it is the thumb that you have; you have the green thumb—but I am interested in the idea and the viability of community gardens. One of the reasons for that is because in my electorate, certainly, open space is at a premium. We have almost no open green space in Holdfast Bay. There are a lot of built-up areas, and that is not good, because you get these smaller gardens where kids cannot really play a lot. They do not have the big backyards that they used to have.

When I was a kid my grandfather used to take me into the back garden, where he grew beans, peas, tomatoes and strawberries, and I was able to see that process occurring. However, that does not happen now with this generation—and it is not their fault; it is just our way of life. So, an urban child's coming to an understanding of where food comes from (which is very important) can be facilitated by community gardens.

I wish Michael Dwyer and his committee the very best for the Brighton Community Eco-garden. I hope very much that we might be able to see something similar happening in Glenelg and perhaps in Seacliff. I once again thank and, indeed, commend the council for the work it has done on this, and I look forward to learning how to grow something that is edible in the near future.