



Speech by

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STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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WARREN STREET THEATRE

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): This morning I wish to draw to the attention of the House the achievements of Terry Maguire, Stephen Rowan and Linda Hassall and the Warren Street Performance Group in educating the community on mental health issues. Recently, I had the honour of attending a performance by the Warren Street Theatre of their play *Crimes of the Mind*. This production was a gut-wrenching exploration of the community's treatment of people with mental illness.

The production explored the social stigma and feelings that result for those faced with such an illness. These issues were depicted through a court scene putting these people on trial. The audience was asked to be the jury. It was their decision, after presentation of the evidence, whether or not to sentence the defendants to an institution—out of sight, out of mind.

The Warren Street Theatre is not the average theatre company. The performers, writers and designers of each production have been diagnosed with various psychiatric disabilities, from depression to schizophrenia. They are all individuals who at some point in their lives have felt trapped or to be prisoners of their illness or diagnosis, but very talented nonetheless.

The stories, or in this play the evidence, presented in the performance are real stories—not someone's imagination but rather the realities of many lives. The performance was powerful and confronting. It touched the core of how judgmental we are—as a society can be—how often we label and disregard people who do not fit the mould, and how we concentrate more on what people cannot do rather than celebrate their abilities.

The Warren Street Performance Group has been educating the community for four years about the reality of mental illness. It is its belief that awareness of the issue leads to a better community understanding of the people who experience it. Terry Maguire and professional arts workers Stephen Rowan and Linda Hassall are to be congratulated on their commitment and innovation over the past four years in getting this performance group up and running. Their dedication and commitment has led to many success stories and restored once very broken lives.
