



Speech by

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CHILD SAFETY

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (12.03 a.m.): Honourable members of this House would all agree that to keep children safe from harm is a challenge faced by parents, teachers and child-care workers every day of their lives. Statistics show that every year one in two children need medical treatment as a result of an injury. Every day, on average, 5,000 children need medical attention, 200 are admitted to hospital and between one and two children die as a result of accidents. Major causes of injury and death are drowning, accidents in the kitchen, unsafe nursery furniture, poisoning, traffic and electrocution.

What people do not realise is that most accidents can be prevented by simple measures and, most importantly, education. Children are most precious and we should do everything possible to nurture them and keep them from harm. Coming from a large family of 11 children, I know the strains and stresses put upon my parents to keep an eye on all of us and to keep us out of harm's way. With the busy lifestyle of parents today, it is even more difficult to spend time with and to watch over our children.

Therefore, it is even more important that children grow up feeling capable of coping with all aspects of their lives. We must teach them some strategies to ensure their own safety and put in place measures which prevent their injury. Not long ago, I found out about the Child Safety Handbook. This book is sponsored by local businesses and 70,000 copies are distributed nationally and free of charge to senior primary school children.

The Child Safety Handbook addresses all issues of safety for children in the home, backyard and school and has useful information on first aid, emergencies, poisons, fire safety, physical and sexual abuse, drug abuse and street and road safety. I congratulate the Queensland Police Service, Legacy, Millbank Publications and advertisers who made this book possible.

I also congratulate the Queensland Police Service for supporting the Safety House concept. In my own electorate of Mount Ommaney, on 5 May the Jindalee Safety House Committee celebrated 20 years of the Safety House concept in Australia through Yellow Day, and 15 years of safety houses in Queensland. These safety houses provide a safe refuge for children from danger when travelling to or from their schools all year round. The feeling of being threatened by adults, abusive children or animals can be alleviated by accessing these safety houses. The Safety House symbol is recognised across my electorate and, similar to those involved in Neighbourhood Watch, these concerned and caring residents make themselves available to offer protection to children. These residents are to be congratulated and encouraged for making a valuable contribution to ensuring child safety.

The aims of the program are not only to act as a deterrent to undesirables but also to deliver safety awareness education programs in our local schools, to encourage children to seek help from someone they can trust by knocking on a Safety House door and to maintain community awareness of the dangers faced by children in our society. Because of our changing family structures and socioeconomic circumstances, it is becoming more and more necessary to have protection measures in place for the very vulnerable. Children are becoming more and more exposed to potential and real dangers.

Without such people as caring teachers and child-care workers, safety houses, Neighbourhood Watch and other concerned organisations, children would be subjected to significant dangers. As a society, we should be here to help.