



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Hansard 22 July 1999

ASPERGER'S SYNDROME SUPPORT NETWORK

Mrs ATTWOOD (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (7.06 p.m.): I rise to bring to the attention of honourable members the efforts of the community in making the public aware of the Asperger's Syndrome Support Network, which was established in March 1995 by a small group of parents. It has now grown to have a membership of more than 250 families from all over Queensland and northern New South Wales. Meetings are open to any interested person and are held at the Corinda State School in my electorate of Mount Ommaney.

The main objectives of the Asperger's Syndrome Support Network are to support research into Asperger's syndrome and autism spectrum disorder, to support families with relevant information about Asperger's syndrome, and conduct community education and awareness programs. This self-funded organisation raises funds to provide services and community awareness.

I first came to identify the problems associated with this particular disorder when I was doorknocking during the State election campaign. A father had just lost his son who, in his early 20s, took his own life unable to cope with the way he was. After many years of struggling with the disorder, he had just landed a great job and was doing well in it. Then for reasons only he knows, he decided to end it all.

It is very difficult for people to understand how sufferers actually feel and how the disorder affects them emotionally. One parent of a sufferer told me that having Asperger's syndrome means that you live in a world of your own, you have no social skills and you take what is said to you literally. If somebody says, "Pull your socks up", you literally do just that.

There are many children in schools who struggle with this disorder but who are not identified as having it. Even when some children are eventually labelled as having this disorder, there is little understanding about how to handle it. The Asperger's Syndrome Support Network organises social outings for sufferers of the disorder. I once went with a group to the planetarium at Mount Coot-tha so that I could meet some of the people involved.

Time expired.
