



Speech by

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NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.25 p.m.): On Saturday, 15 July I joined some 250 members of the Queensland Neighbourhood Watch movement at the annual rally held at the QUT Carseldine campus. I attended in my role as area coordinator of the Freshwater Neighbourhood Watch scheme. I know that it is unusual for MLAs to hold this office, but I helped to reinvigorate my local Neighbourhood Watch scheme in 1997 prior to re-entering Parliament and my committee now just will not let me resign. I appreciate the opportunity, though, to continue to serve my local community in this way as it keeps me in touch with grassroots views.

I must admit to having a particular motivation in attending this year's rally, because Charles Williams, a highly respected member of the Neighbourhood Watch movement from my electorate, was to receive the community member award for the far-north region. In addition, every year one of the regional award winners is selected as the State Neighbourhood Watch member in recognition of their exceptional contribution to the Neighbourhood Watch movement. Having seen Charles in action over many years I was convinced he would be a very worthy recipient, but as I listened to the achievements of the many other regional winners I realised that our Charles faced very tough competition. I held my breath as the winner was announced, and I am not sure who was more excited—Charles or me—when he was called to come forward and receive the annual State Neighbourhood Watch member award for the year 2000. He was indeed a most worthy winner.

Charles Williams, who will be 80 next month, is a very special person whom I value as a friend and adviser. I will briefly outline some of his achievements. He served the Neighbourhood Watch movement selflessly for a decade and still spends several hours every day on various Neighbourhood Watch tasks, despite being in poor health. He helped establish the Machans Beach Neighbourhood Watch scheme in 1990, when he became the inaugural treasurer and a block coordinator. During the last 10 years he has lived at both Machans Beach and the neighbouring community of Holloways Beach and has held the positions of area coordinator, zone coordinator and newsletter editor for these Neighbourhood Watch schemes, which have been held up by the police as model schemes.

Charles recently merged the Neighbourhood Watch annual general meetings for both Machans Beach and Holloways Beach, with support from these communities. This initiative, which has resulted in better communication, strong networking, quality support and swapping of information between the two communities, has been very valuable. I enjoyed the 10th annual general meeting of Holloways Beach, held last year, and I am looking forward to the 10th anniversary of the Machans Beach scheme later on this year.

Charles has produced some 86 newsletters for both Machans Beach and Holloways Beach over the years and is currently in the process of developing a regional newsletter for the far-north region. In 1998 Charles was invited to become a member of the Cairns City Council Safety Committee and to represent the regional Neighbourhood Watch committee, of which he has been a long-term member. Last year he became the Neighbourhood Watch adviser to Chief Superintendent Conder to provide a regional perspective for Neighbourhood Watch.

Charles also chairs the Marlin Coast Police Community Consultative Committee, recently renamed the Marlin Coast Community Forum, which I helped to re-form after my re-election. In the last year the committee has involved itself in supporting youth recreational activities, in partnership with the police, and I thank Senior Sergeant Tim Nolan from the Smithfield Police Station for his support. The

committee has also organised community meetings on such topics as youth crime, suicide, drug use and gambling to foster informed community debate and involvement.

There is no question of the value of Neighbourhood Watch and its contribution to the relatively low crime rate in the Marlin Coast and in the Cairns suburbs in my electorate. I place on record my appreciation of the work of all the Neighbourhood Watch groups in my electorate. Charles, currently the coordinator of Neighbourhood Watch in Machans Beach, is obviously exceptional, but Theresa Cairns of Holloways Beach, Ian Stephens of Yorkeys Knob, John Brittain of Kewarra Beach, George Laws of Edge Hill and Janet Walder of Whitfield all deserve our thanks for their commitment and service to the community.

Neighbourhood Watch is a partnership between the police and the community and I also express appreciation of the efforts of all the police in their role as police liaison officers who support Neighbourhood Watch, often in their own time. In particular I acknowledge Sergeant Caroline Barker of the Cairns police for her role over very many years in supporting Neighbourhood Watch. I also commend and give my best wishes to Peter Van Vree, who is the State coordinator for Neighbourhood Watch, who after many years is finishing duties in that role and moving on. There are so many valuable contributions made by the police and community to Neighbourhood Watch. It has been my pleasure to be involved with that particular organisation.
