



Speech by

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### MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA NORTH

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#### CRIME PREVENTION

**Mr SHINE** (Toowoomba North—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): It is with a measure of excitement that I wish to inform the House of the existence within state schools in my electorate of a most worthwhile program known as Peace Builders: A Crime Prevention Initiative. As I understand it, Peace Builders was introduced to Australia by Dr Simon Petrie, a criminologist then with the QUT. He apparently acquired the scheme from the US and makes it available by way of franchise. It is all about creating a window of opportunity for early promotion of positive behaviours and inculcating appropriate conduct.

Toowoomba, in common with other cities and towns throughout Queensland, unfortunately has its share of crime, especially involving young people. Because of this, and accepting that attacking the causes of crime makes good sense, this program was introduced. It was decided to trial it in Rockville State School commencing in 1999 under the auspices of Toowoomba Crime Prevention Partnership Inc., which is itself an initiative of the state government and is supported by the Premier's Department.

This partnership represents a group of people working with the community to try to build a peaceful city and comprises agencies such as those dealing with domestic violence, victims of crime, Downs Group Training, the Toowoomba Youth Service and the Older Person's Action Program; business and community groups such as Neighbourhood Watch, the media, the clergy, the Aboriginal Health and Legal Service, and the Youth Council; local government, in this case the Toowoomba City Council; and state government, encompassing the Police Department, the Education Queensland, the Department of Families, Youth and Community Care, the Department of Housing, members of parliament and the Australian Army.

The mission of the crime prevention partnership is simply to build a safer community for the people of Toowoomba. The approach of the partnership is to define and prioritise the issues, select strategies to address them, prepare a plan, implement it and, finally, put in place measures to evaluate and monitor the program. Among the areas requiring intervention were community safety, bullying and truancy at school, fear of crime and social violation experienced by older persons.

The Peace Builders Program is but one example of individual projects currently in place or being developed. Others include unemployment programs in partnership with Downs Group Training, Crime Prevention Learning Circles, Central Business District Commercial Watch, a series of interactive radio programs and the Graffiti Task Force.

In common with other places, Toowoomba has suffered increasing crime and perception of crime, aberrant behaviour in the city centre, an increasing percentage of families at risk, racial issues, fear of antisocial behaviour and crime, and a lack of respect for persons and property. Accepting that these adverse conditions applied, the crime prevention partnership, wanting to build a safer community for the people of Toowoomba, adopted the Peace Builders Program to promote positive and appropriate behaviour.

The program commenced in 1999 at Rockville State School. Has it worked? An examination of the suspension statistics for the years 1998, 1999 and 2000 shows that in 1998, 20 males and four females, a total of 24, were suspended; in 1999, 16 males and three females, a total of 19, were suspended; in 2000, two males and one female, a total of three, were suspended. Rockville has a reasonably high proportion of indigenous children—about 25 per cent. The suspensions by culture show that in 1998 there were nine indigenous and 15 non-indigenous; in 1999, indigenous, 7 and non-indigenous, 12; and in 2001, indigenous, nil and non-indigenous, three.

To emphasise the dramatic beneficial effect, honourable members have only to compare the drop in year 6 level children who were suspended. In 1998, six were suspended, but in 2000 only one was suspended. Honourable members can look at the overall figures for the whole school showing that 24 children were suspended in 1998 compared with only three in 2000, or the cutting of the number of suspension days involved from 102 in 1998 to six in 2000. Anecdotal reports from visitors to the school before and after the introduction of the program attest to the remarkable turnabout in the children's behaviour, as is my experience.

Following the success of Peace Builders at Rockville, it has been introduced with success at Wilsonton State School. I am pleased to advise the House that the joint entry by Rockville-Wilsonton at Toowoomba Showcase State Education Awareness Week last week won the event for them. As more time becomes available—

Time expired.

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