



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard 29 November 2001

VOICES FROM THE EDGE SEMINAR

Mr NEIL ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (7.05 p.m.): On 12 November I opened the Voices from the Edge Seminar run at the St Lucia Golf Club conference rooms. This seminar explored issues of self-harm and suicide among young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The seminar was organised by the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland in conjunction with government and non-government representatives, including officers from the Office of Youth Affairs in the Department of Employment and Training. The Queensland government Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy, through the Department of Employment and Training, provided \$26,000 to the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland to assist with costs associated with the seminar.

It was the fourth in a series of seminars that aim to identify and coordinate strategies for reducing and preventing self-harm and suicide among young Queenslanders. Specific issues dealt with included the impact of migration, past trauma and the experiences of racism. In light of recent international and national events, racism and feelings of isolation and insecurity are pressures that young people from migrant families and young refugees have to deal with more than ever before. Often it is the children and young people who bear the brunt of intolerance and who must deal with situations over which they have had little control and no hand in creating.

Some of the pressures faced by these young people include feeling caught between different cultures, being in families trying to deal with the stresses of migration, dealing with feelings of social and cultural isolation, facing the ugliness of racism, and coping with past traumas. Some of the horrific experiences of some young migrants and refugees are beyond the imagination and experience of most Australians. We should all be aware of the enormity of these issues and their potential to impact on the mental and physical health of a young person.

This seminar provided youth workers and policy makers with the chance to share information and an increased understanding of issues faced by young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Its aim was to contribute to the debate on how to reduce incidents of self-harm and suicide through early intervention and prevention strategies. Recommendations from the seminar will be considered as part of the government's new five-year strategic plan for suicide prevention, which is currently being developed.

It is important to recognise the invaluable work of community organisations such as the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland in tackling this important issue for young people and their families. It is only as a cohesive group that the government, the community and individuals can make a difference. I offer congratulations and say thank you to the Youth Affairs Network for its part in organising and running this significant event, and I say thank you to the many individuals and organisations that participated and contributed to its deliberations.
