



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

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CLIFTON COMMUNITY YOUTH COUNCIL

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (10.28 a.m.): Young people in rural communities are facing tough times with drug usage, unemployment and suicide rates reaching very disturbing levels. However, I would like to highlight one rural community in my electorate where the youth are fighting back against these trends and using their initiative to address youth issues in their region.

In the township of Clifton a group of young local adults who want to make a difference in their small country town have formed the Clifton Community Youth Council. A major driving force behind promoting this council is the 2001 Darling Downs Miss Showgirl, Helen Bisdee, whom my wife and I had the great pleasure of judging as the Clifton Miss Showgirl.

The council is striving to empower youth in Clifton aiming to give them a voice in shire council decisions as well as creating opportunities to advance themselves through group workshops organised with Queensland TAFE. Along with these initiatives, other activities are being planned, such as dance parties and skateboard competitions. The group is currently working closely with the Clifton Shire Council and the local police to establish a youth centre in Clifton where young people can meet and socialise in a totally drug and alcohol-free environment. The local police and shire council will closely facilitate this youth centre to ensure a secure, supervised framework. However, the running and responsibility of the centre would be placed squarely in the hands of the youth council and its young members.

These initiatives are aimed at targeting rural youth depression, the temptation of drug and alcohol use as well as addressing the constant transition of young people from regional to metropolitan centres. With a peer support structure in place, local youth will feel that they have somewhere to go and people to talk to about issues that impact on their lives.

I support completely the Clifton Community Youth Council in their efforts to create a more youth-friendly environment in their town and praise them for their vision and their leadership in addressing the unique needs of rural youth.
