



Speech by

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TOOWOOMBA SURF LIFE-SAVING CLUB

Mr COPELAND (Cunningham—NPA) (7.12 p.m.): Tonight I would like to promote Queensland's first-ever inland surf life saving club in the beautiful range-side city of Toowoomba. Warwick has had a junior program established for some time with close links to a coastal club. That program has been extremely successful, but Toowoomba intends to be the first fully established club.

The Toowoomba Surf Life Saving Club was established at a meeting of interested stakeholders on 11 July this year. I was very happy to be the first-ever signed up financial member of the club and am very proud to hold the position of vice-president on the very first club executive.

Many of my colleagues on both of sides of the chamber may be amused at the concept of a surf life saving club in Toowoomba, where admittedly there is no beach or, for that matter, any surf. However, the establishment of this club in Toowoomba is by no means a joke or a tourist gimmick.

The Toowoomba Surf Life Saving Club has been established to provide the very important service of educating people on the Darling Downs through raising awareness of the dangers of swimming in the surf and teaching safe practices for swimming at the coast. The Darling Downs is classified as an at-risk area by Surf Lifesaving Queensland as it is over 50 kilometres from the coast. Invariably holiday makers travel to the beach only once or twice a year and are not familiar with some of the dangers of swimming in the ocean. Consequently, the provision of such a service to people on the downs is of vital importance. Hopefully, it will assist to reduce the incidences of surf-related tragedies.

While education and awareness are the cornerstone of the club's existence, it is envisaged that down the track the club will enter surf-lifesaving competitions. The Nobby Beach Surf Life Saving Club has kindly donated a surf rescue boat and our club is gathering teams to train on one of our local dams. In the first instance this will be for fun, but with a view to maybe getting serious down the track.

At the present time, a nipper training program is in place that has amassed a very enthusiastic band of Toowoomba juniors. For the initial program, the club received 80 interested potential nippers, but could afford to handle only 40. Therefore, it is a major goal of the club to expand this very worthwhile program. On excursions to the coast, professional surf-lifesavers have marvelled at the enthusiasm and ability of the young nippers in the program.

This week I attended the club's very successful corporate dinner, which was well attended by leading businesses and sporting identifies, as well as residents from all sections of the community. The development and success of the Toowoomba Surf Life Saving Club would not be possible without the dedication of club President, John White, and my fellow Vice-President, Brian Turner. Their combined efforts to get the club up and running have been invaluable.

Undoubtedly, the most encouraging aspect of the club's establishment has been the overwhelming support of the Toowoomba community. With this support, it is my hope that the Toowoomba Surf Life Saving Club will continue to thrive, promoting water skills and a healthy and active lifestyle for young people on the Darling Downs. If the only message we get out is to swim between the flags, that will be a very successful outcome.
