



Speech by

CHRISTINE SMITH

MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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MIRIKAI

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (7.12 p.m.): Unless one has had a child involved in the use of illicit drugs, it is impossible to imagine what parents and families go through. To raise a child and to see that young person become a stranger who no longer cares about himself or his life must be tragic. It was with pleasure, therefore, that I recently attended the graduation ceremony of a number of young people who had completed a drug rehabilitation course at Mirikai in the Burleigh electorate.

Speaking with these young people, their parents and friends, I was reminded again of the commitment of the staff and volunteers at Mirikai and the wonderful work they do. Young people who have hit rock bottom, who are no longer accepted by mainstream society and who are rejected by their peers and often their families find an environment in which they can rebuild their lives, rediscover their self-worth and become valuable members of society.

Mirikai began as a drug referral centre in 1971. Since then, it has grown to become a quality provider of alcohol and drug education, prevention, assessment, referral, detoxification and rehabilitation services. Recently, Mirikai was awarded a certificate of national quality accreditation. The awarding of this certificate from the Institute for Healthy Communities Australia followed a four-day review that was the final stage of a process initiated in 1997 and supported by Queensland Health. Mirikai is the first drug and alcohol treatment centre in Australia to receive national accreditation. During the process this centre was awarded not fewer than 10 commendations, where the normal maximum is three. Mirikai is not just the first; it is the best, and has set a standard for other organisations.

I take this opportunity to applaud Mirikai for its outstanding work, in particular Mary Alcorn, the clinical director of Mirikai, a real inspiration to the residents. Her team of dedicated workers creates miracles every day of the week. Where many in the community tend to dismiss drug and alcohol problems as too hard, Mirikai has tried and succeeded. I have long been a supporter of Mirikai and have undertaken its drug awareness course to give me a better insight into the problems of addiction.

Young people who have been through the program describe how Mirikai provides a feeling of safety within the therapeutic community, how it provides non-judgmental, holistic care and how it empowers clients by giving them a significant role in the operational running of the centre. Seeing all this come together at the graduation ceremony was a valuable lesson for me. The support of family and friends, together with assistance from Mary and her team, has provided amazing outcomes. I congratulate all involved with Mirikai on their triumphs and look forward to sharing many more with them.