



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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TOWNSVILLE MULTICULTURAL SUPPORT GROUP

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (11.40 a.m.): I rise to inform the House of a publication which I think members of this House should be very interested in—that is, a publication on living in harmony. I take this opportunity to table a copy of this publication for the benefit of the House.

Ms Nelson-Carr interjected.

Mr BRISKEY: It is an excellent publication. The publication was produced by the Townsville Multicultural Support Group Inc., or TMSG, a community based organisation which includes over 180 members from diverse ethnic backgrounds and which supports refugees and early migrants on arrival through a range of programs. Part of the mission of the TMSG is to promote a greater understanding of multiculturalism through tolerance and acceptance of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The project, entitled *Living Harmoniously*, was inspired by the responses of children to visits to their schools by members of the TMSG. By all accounts the schools were enthusiastic and delighted to participate.

These simple but extremely intuitive messages produced by the children in this booklet are an excellent reminder to us to promote living in harmony in our daily lives. The visits to schools by members of the group helped to demystify multiculturalism for schoolchildren. It also introduced them to people from different backgrounds and enabled them to meet people from other cultures to help them see that we are all the same. The project also drives home an important message—that is, it is our differences which bring us together.

The booklet entitled *Tips for Living in Harmony* was produced by the group in conjunction with outback, inland and coastal north Queensland students. The main aim was to further the understanding of the riches of living in a multicultural society to school-age children. This project was inspired by the responses of children to visits by members of the group from such diverse countries as Fiji, Somalia, Borneo, El Salvador, Iraq, the Philippines and Ireland.

Twelve members of the group visited seven schools throughout the Townsville-Thuringowa, Hinchinbrook, Burdekin and Dalrymple shires. The members have lived in Queensland for between six months and over 20 years. Initially, the visits involved the members sharing geography, the language, song and traditional customs of their countries of origin and responding to questions from the students. As the children became more comfortable and developed trust, the members shared more personally their experience of settlement and the response by Australians. This led into discussions and exercises around the *Living in Harmony* theme. To get the students thinking, a prompt sheet of questions was provided and asked many questions, such as: how do you feel when you meet someone who looks and speaks differently from you? How do you think that person might be feeling? What can we do to make each other feel more comfortable? What is multiculturalism? There are many wars around the world, so what do we know that we could teach the world about living in harmony?

The tips from the children are truly insightful. Their ability to perceive the parallel between the need to resolve the little daily individual wars, hurts and resentments and misunderstandings and the resolution of world wars and conflict was inspiring and hopeful. Some of the tips which the children shared included, 'When you get angry, don't take it out with fists or battles. Try to talk,' and 'Try to recognise other countries, cultures, religions and do not step on each other's beliefs,' and 'We have enough love for our family. It's not hard to love other people also,' and 'It

doesn't matter if we are white or black people or speak a different language,' and 'To tell them to be nice and not to fight anymore and just get on together,' and 'Say sorry to Aboriginal people because we took over their land and move on together with them.' I think there are some very good tips in there for some honourable members of this House to take notice of. In fact, I have sent a copy of the booklet to all honourable members.

The multicultural harmony project was a great success. Teachers have said that by creating an awareness of the impact and importance that migrants have on Australian society our children will hopefully grow up to be more tolerant and know a lot more about working together towards living in harmony. Some have said that they feel very privileged to have been involved in such a project, especially given the current news and topical issues such as the war against Iraq. In particular, Mingela State School had a unique situation where it was basically a one culture community—that is, all families own land and cattle in the area, children are from two-parent families—

Time expired.