



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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#### **ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (7.13 p.m.): Recently, I received a letter from another desperate mum. This mum states that her 14-year-old daughter has ADD and is completely out of control—roaming the streets, pregnant and in with a bad crowd. Her mother says that she has tried to get help from the police, who say that they are not babysitters and that no crime has been committed. This woman tried contacting the Department of Families, but as no violence has been committed and there is no sexual abuse, nothing can be done. But to me, a pregnant 14-year-old sounds like there has been abuse. So this woman tried local agencies. The CTC offered help by allowing the girl to stay at a hostel, but not for very long periods. The school tried. It had some communication with the child, but the child never responded.

But what have the governments done? They enable children to roam the streets and they pay them to stay away from home. They remove the right of the parents to keep children at home. On the one hand, the government tells kids not to take help from strangers, but on the other hand, it encourages them to do so by enabling children to stay away from home. This child, who has been diagnosed with ADD, is normally a good child. But she is involved in drugs and alcohol abuse, sex and criminal activity, and refuses to take her medication as prescribed. When she is off her medication, she becomes violent, abusive, has no tolerance, has no understanding and is unable to focus. When she is on her medication, she becomes focused, she is able to talk about any subject, she is lovable and enjoys being cuddled, she has a beautiful nature and is very helpful.

Even though this child is in no danger at home, the parental right to keep her there and safe seems to be removed. This child is allowed to roam streets, live in parks and under houses. She also breaks into flats. The parents discipline their daughter. The punishment fits the crime, but the government allows the girl to run away. It pains her if she does not have everything that other kids have. Other people do not help, either, when they extend aid to the child after she has run away. Once a woman abused this mother because her daughter was on the streets. She had no clothes other than the ones that were on her back, no food, was dehydrated and dirty. So this woman gave the girl a meal and a drink. This woman was asked, 'Please don't do that again.' The woman was quite surprised. She asked, 'Why?' The mother said, 'Because she has everything that she needs at home. It is just her choice to roam the streets.'

The mother says, 'I am only guilty of loving and caring for my daughter and trying to avoid what the government seems to feel is okay by allowing a 14-year-old out on the streets to get pregnant.' It seems that governments fail to address the reality of what is really happening to children who just want freedom with no-one telling them what to do and no responsibility for anyone other than for themselves. This is not the first case that I have had; it is actually the third. I would like all governments—this government and the federal government—to look at this issue and to make sure that these young kids just do not go out on the streets and that it is not too easy for them to do that.