



Speech by

PAUL HOOLIHAN

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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YOUTH

Mr HOOLIHAN (Keppel—ALP) (9.21 p.m.): When I look around I see people expressing concerns at the problems caused in our society by youth. Newspapers and television seem to highlight the fact that crimes and other problems are caused by young people. But each time a problem occurs and our youth get the blame, the media seem to overlook the fact that the problems are caused by about one per cent of our youth and never pay any credence to the 99 per cent of our young people who just want to get on with their lives.

How many critics who go into a supermarket, buy takeaway food, rent a video or buy a newspaper look at the person who serves them? They are usually teenagers or young people, many of whom are working to pay their way through university or for their education because they have been shabbily treated by our federal government. Even in those football teams, hockey teams, basketball teams and other sporting teams which have some older stars, people should take account of the many thousands of young players and competitors who train hard and just want to achieve. I have had a long involvement with junior sport, and criticism of our young people is not justified.

Society generally seems to lump all of our youth together and blame the majority for the deeds of the minority. People should go on to any university campus and see the number of young people who just wish to prepare for their adulthood or look at the number of young apprentices and TAFE students who are undertaking training courses to provide for their future. We must look at some policies which really act to protect some of our daredevil young from themselves. But who of us in our own youth did not take risks which may have caused us harm if they backfired or worked out wrongly?

I see my own children and the children of friends, and their whole occupation is to ensure they are able to earn sufficient income to provide for themselves and their partners and children. I believe that society as a whole must look behind the small number of misfits and dysfunctional youth and consider the large number of successful youth who contribute to the high quality of life which we enjoy in Australia. For those misfits and dysfunctional youth we need to have a strong and effective legal system and to help institutions that either force them on to the straight and narrow or seek that the present knockers in society provide an example to them, to show there is another way to live a fruitful and happy life.

In my own electorate of Keppel we have a large number of young people who are too busy getting on with life. They participate in eisteddfods, art, theatre, sport and all the enjoyable things in our society which give it the values it has today. After watching the thousands of children and young adults who attended and supported Anzac ceremonies, I am pleased that the future of this country will lie in the hands of these committed and concerned young Australians.