



Speech by

**Ray Hopper**

**MEMBER FOR DARLING DOWNS**

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## **SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY FUNDING**

**Mr HOPPER** (Darling Downs—NPA) (9.14 pm): I wish to bring to the attention of the House my intention to call on the government to deliver on its promise to provide \$3 million in funding to assist state schools in providing chaplaincy services. Currently school chaplaincy services are being funded by the generosity of individuals, churches, businesses and local councils. I believe it is time for the state government to support this vital service for the benefit of our youth.

Without this promised \$3 million from the state government, many schools will not be able to provide this service for their students. More often than not it is the schools located within low socioeconomic and rural areas that are unable to provide this service, and these are the very schools that are most in need of this service. School chaplains support and encourage children and teenagers to work through issues ranging from family breakdown, loneliness and bullying to drug abuse, depression and suicide. The work provided by chaplains in our schools is invaluable. Existing chaplaincy services are successfully addressing the needs of our youth.

The results that are being achieved throughout these programs are outstanding to say the least. Our youth need this type of service, and I have been informed that these young people are independently seeking out this assistance and are responding extremely well to the program. This particular program is accessing these vulnerable children at their most critical time and encouraging them to make informed and appropriate choices in their time of need. There is an increasing level of pressure on today's young people.

In addition to striving for success with their academic work, many face other struggles such as fitting in with their peers, avoiding the traps of drug and alcohol abuse and dealing with complex family dynamics. Chaplaincy provides an avenue for these young people to explore their issues in a safe and supportive way. While chaplaincy is often provided for by church groups, the role of a chaplain is one of pastoral care rather than as a religious educator. These young people feel safe and they have a need for those outside of their family environment to show an interest in their lives.

There are few other services available that are in such a unique position as school chaplaincies. I am fully supportive of this program and I would like to see it expanded for the benefit of the young people who find themselves in need of assistance. Let us all remember this type of service may assist a member of our own family.

Only last week the school captain of Downlands College in Toowoomba took his own life. How tragic is that? Imagine the devastation of that family. These school chaplains get into the lives of these young people. I was watching Channel 7 the other morning and the three commentators were running down Howard's plan to put \$90 million into school chaplaincies, and God forgive them. They have no idea. They have not got a clue. These chaplains get involved with the lives of these young kids. They express support. They express friendship. They break down peer pressure.

**Mr Reeves:** That's why we are giving them \$3 million.

**Mr HOPPER:** What have you done? You have offered \$3 million and given nothing. That is what this adjournment speech is about tonight. It is to call on the government to make its election promise fair dinkum.

Time expired.