



Speech by

Jack Dempsey

MEMBER FOR BUNDABERG

Hansard Thursday, 6 September 2007

CHILD PROTECTION WEEK

Mr DEMPSEY (Bundaberg—NPA) (7.46 pm): This is Child Protection Week and it is appropriate to focus on the safety of all children. Child protection starts in the family home, but many different groups and organisations also do a great job in helping to provide for the needs of young people. One of these groups helping children is the I Can Children's Program, which is facilitated by Bundaberg Centacare and supported by Xstrata Community Partnerships Program Queensland. I thank them for their support of this very worthwhile program that turns young, shy, hidden rocks into bright, positive and confident diamonds.

The I Can Children's Course is a group program that provides therapeutic intervention for those children who are uncomfortable in the school environment. These children are identified by teachers and parents as anxious, reluctant to join in and as having limited friendships. The program is held at the host school and focuses on recognition of strengths, the practise of new skills and the development of self-confidence in the individual child, thereby encouraging participation in the school community. The course offers friendship skills, skills for resilience, development of positive self-image and new confidence.

The children are aged between six and eight years, participate in a group of six and attend the course for three weeks. The course uses art therapy, music and movement, stories, snack time social skills and strengths based counselling. The objectives of the course are to help children understand themselves and others and to assist children to develop and maintain friendships. As well as attending a pre-course consultation with the facilitators, the parents are invited to a follow-up session to assist with the evaluation. This program has already been conducted in five Bundaberg schools with very positive results. I especially thank program coordinator Shari Jackson, Centacare manager Donna Forbes and her professional and dedicated staff. Centacare is certainly fulfilling its motto of 'enhancing the wellbeing of individuals and families'.

Many thousands of young people were also enlightened as the World Youth Day Journey of the Cross and Icon visited Bundaberg en route to World Youth Day in Sydney in August 2008. This visit galvanised the district and regardless of people's religious beliefs the whole community—both young and old—owe a depth of gratitude to the Bundaberg JCI committee, headed by Angela Croake, and including Cheryl Peterson, Anne Sheehan, Denise Tuzes, Father Matthew Moloney, Paulette Huggins, the Bundaberg based National Evangelisation Team members Chris Taucar, Sarah Schick, Melissa Baker, David Hood, Alyse French, Craig Hancock, Bev Bennett, Michelle May and Mary Taylor, and the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton World Youth Day Coordinator Stefanie Lloyd, who will be there every step of the way until the World Youth Day Journey of the Cross and Icon leaves the diocese from Longreach.