




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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ADJOURNMENT

Burnett Electorate, Buddy Bench Project

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (2.08 am): This morning I rise to inform the House of a local buddy bench project that has commenced in the Burnett electorate, with buddy benches being delivered to schools throughout the region to encourage friendships in the playground to stamp out bullying. The buddy bench is as a tool to help schoolkids who are lonely and want to make friends. We all know that the schoolyard can be a tough place for kids, who sometimes forget to think about others. The buddy bench is a place for kids to sit, to send out visual signals to each other, and of course it is about prompting to extend a helping hand.

We hear more and more about the impacts of bullying every day, and as kids get older it seems to get worse. By addressing friendships and inclusion at an early age, we hope the buddy bench project will make our schoolyards a better place. What has been found is that it is students alone who are driving this initiative at our schools with the buddy bench and how to be kind and compassionate towards their classmates. Our motivation is to see long-term effects in terms of bullying, including students learning empathy and kindness towards other people, and of course sometimes we want to see kids break outside their small circle of friends to look to others.

I enlisted the help of the Bargara Men's Shed to manufacture a number of benches, and members will be on hand next week to help deliver six benches to our local schools. I want to thank the great team at the Bargara Men's Shed. When I first approached Mike Brady and the guys, they were very enthusiastic to participate and were particularly interested in a concept that would engage their members but more importantly contribute to an antibullying campaign.

This initiative of buddy benches is a simple concept renowned for helping to create inclusive playgrounds. Buddy benches will provide students with a safe, comforting place to go when they are feeling lonely or in need of a friend. It is great to see our local schools getting behind the campaign to boost friendships and morale in the playground. Our local schools are doing a wonderful job in promoting antibullying messages, and these buddy benches complement the schools' social learning and campaign against bullying.

Seventeen of our local schools have engaged with me on this issue, all supporting the concept and the desired outcomes. We look forward to delivering the buddy benches to six local schools next week. We have another dozen being made, to be supplied in the near future. Such a simple concept can do so much to boost confidence of a lonely child. I thank the local men's sheds for getting on board. Thanks to their help, 17 schools will benefit from the buddy bench program in the Burnett electorate. It is timely to acknowledge other members from this side of the House who have engaged with this best practice initiative and of course the member for Burleigh and his team who started this project. It was clearly a good project and I think other members of the House could consider the same.