



Speech By
Hon. Laura Gerber

MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Lacey Lane Plushies

 **Hon. LJ GERBER** (Currumbin—LNP) (Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services) (9.06 pm): One inspiring young woman in the Currumbin electorate, Lacey Lane, has turned her lived experience with mental health challenges into something that is helping young people right across the world. In 2022 while attending high school Lacey began struggling. Like many young people facing anxiety, the pressures of everyday life became overwhelming and she became disengaged from school and isolated from her peers.

A year later, Lacey was diagnosed with ADHD and autism, which helped explain many of the difficulties she had been experiencing. Determined to find a better way to manage her feelings, Lacey discovered the comfort and emotional support that animals can provide. In 2023 Lacey purchased a plush dog for emotional support and began taking it everywhere with her—to school, doctor appointments and out in the community. What began as a personal coping tool quickly became something more—a mission to help others. Lacey realised that there were many other young people experiencing the same challenges and she wanted to help them find the same comfort that she did.

At just 16 years old, Lacey launched her online business—Lacey Lane Plushies—offering a range of realistic cuddly plush animals designed to bring calm, comfort and connection to young people experiencing anxiety, autism or the pressures of school life. In September last year, Lacey opened her first bricks-and-mortar store at the Pines Shopping Centre in Elanora in the Currumbin electorate. Her business now makes around 7,000 sales per month and is creating employment opportunities for other neurodiverse people in our community. Lacey's store also provides a safe meeting place for teens and young adults with autism, ADHD and other disabilities. On Sunday, 1 March she held her first instore meet-up, where 30 young people came together to share their stories and make new friends, some travelling as long as 13 hours to attend.

Today Lacey Lane Plushies are helping children and teens right across the world including in Japan, Germany and the UK—helping them to manage their mental health by providing them with comfort, calm and the confidence to face each day. Lacey Lane is an incredible example of resilience, creativity, compassion and determination. She has taken her own lived experience and turned it into something that is making a real difference. She is an entrepreneur and she is making that difference not only in the Currumbin electorate but also right across the world.

I congratulate Lacey on her remarkable achievements. I am so proud to highlight Lacey in Queensland parliament tonight, her entrepreneurial skills and the small business she started for the benefit of other young Queenslanders who are suffering with autism, ADHD and mental health issues. I thank her for the positive difference she is making in the lives of so many people in our community not just in the Currumbin electorate but also right across the world.