

**Question on Notice**

**No. 666**

**Asked on 16 June 2004**

MRS Lavarch asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the Travelsmart Program -

What is the progress of the program being undertaken at Eatons Hill State School and the benefits this program will bring to the students of this school?

ANSWER:

I thank the Member for Kurwongbah for the question. Mrs Lavarch launched the TravelSmart project at Eatons Hill in May last year. I would like to thank Linda for her personal support and involvement in this exciting community initiative.

TravelSmart is a voluntary behaviour change program that empowers local communities to reduce green house gas emissions by adopting healthier, more active and environmentally sustainable travel behaviours. The TravelSmart Schools project was developed to raise awareness about car dependency and encourage students and their parents to try other forms of transport.

British studies have shown a decrease in the number of children walking and cycling to school from 80% in 1971 to 8% in 1991. Schools are now major traffic generators and children are not learning basic life skills such as how to cross a road safely. About 20% of Australian children are obese or overweight. The decline in transport related activity is a major contributor to this figure.

At Eatons Hill State School Queensland Transport (QT) has established a project working group containing representatives from the school community, the TravelSmart team, Education Queensland, QT road safety and Pine Rivers Shire Council to accurately assess local needs.

Results from a site audit and travel survey have been integrated into a school travel plan. Initiatives include a local access guide to help parents plan safe walking and cycling routes, competitions and other incentives that reward families who use sustainable transport modes, and brochures that explain how to TravelSmart and the advantages of travelling smart.

QT also contracts the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Walk to School program at all TravelSmart schools including Eatons Hill. This program teaches students road safety skills, increases opportunities for physical activity and decreases the number of cars at the school gate.

QUT have assisted TravelSmart to implement and evaluate travel surveys and recruit community volunteers to walk small groups of students to or from school. Volunteers are provided training and accreditation, uniforms, badge identification and undergo a working with children or blue card check.

Already three community volunteers are being trained to walk about 20 students from Eatons Hill State School two afternoons each week. This positive start is expected to grow strongly before the program is evaluated in September 2004.

TravelSmart will be working with the school community to increase the number of students and volunteers participating in this and other clean green school travel options. Public transport, cycling and walking will target:

- school gate congestion;
- dangerous traffic conditions; and
- the growing social problem of childhood obesity.

This important QT initiative is playing a vital role in the Government's commitment to building safer, healthier communities.