

**Question on Notice  
No. 410  
Asked on 13 March 2008**

MS CROFT asked the Minister for Police, Corrective Services and Sport (MS SPENCE)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on Safe Hands?

ANSWER:

In response to concerns about infant and child physical abuse, a significant multi-agency public information initiative known as Project Safehands has been developed around the theme of using safe hands when dealing with children. The project is designed to raise community awareness of issues related to the physical abuse and rough handling of infants and young children. It also highlights the availability of related support services and resources offered by many government and non-government agencies. The aim of the project is to reduce the incidence of this physical abuse and the associated harm caused to infants and young children.

A trial of the project has been conducted in Ipswich City. This location for the trial was chosen because of its proximity to project leaders and strong support from the local community.

The trial provided for the implementation of a number of key initiatives including:

- the development of a Safehands website ([www.safehands.qld.gov.au](http://www.safehands.qld.gov.au));
- the establishment of a 24 hour telephone triage and referral line;
- the development of a parent tool kit for new parents at the Ipswich Hospital;
- the development of a high-profile information DVD; and
- visits to new parents by Safehands volunteer staff to view the DVD and complete questionnaires for evaluation.

These initiatives have been very successful, particularly the external website which is bannered by the four core partner agencies (Department of Child Safety, Department of Communities, Queensland Health and Queensland Police Service). The website is recognised as an excellent resource for parents and professionals. It has received over 2,000 visits and continues to be a valuable source of information on infant and child physical abuse issues.

An important part of the project was the establishment of a partnership with the University of Southern Queensland, which has primary responsibility for the evaluation of the trial currently being undertaken. This evaluation includes a cost-effectiveness analysis and a statistical analysis of performance indicators. The relevant cost and performance data are now being obtained from the partner agencies. The findings of the evaluation will assist in assessing the costs and benefits of extending the project to other areas.

A potentially significant outcome was that no child born in the trial area during the trial period was subject to a serious assault requiring the intervention of police. The possible role of Project Safehands in this result is yet to be evaluated.

Queensland Health nursing staff and Child Protection Liaison Officers at the Ipswich District Hospital have been very supportive of Project Safehands, especially in distributing the 'parent tool kits' and showing the DVD in the maternity ward and at antenatal classes and child health clinics.

The Chair of the Project Safehands Steering Committee, Assistant Commissioner Col McCallum of the Southern Police Region, has obtained in-principle support from the Senior Executive of the Queensland Police Service for this project to be promoted in other police regions.

Significant financial and resource issues will need to be addressed if Project Safehands is to be extended throughout the State. Planning has commenced to examine the feasibility of extending the project to other areas of South East Queensland.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable support for this initiative provided by government and non-government organisations including Queensland Health, Department of Communities, Department of Child Safety, Ipswich City Council, Brisbane Broncos, Telstra, Parentline, Kids Helpline, Womensline, Mensline, DV Hotline, Child Care Information Service, Family Relationship Advice Line and the Victims of Crime Counselling and Support Service.