

Question on Notice No. 7, Thursday, 18 March 2004

Mr CHOI asked the Minister for Emergency Services (Mr Cummins) –
What will be the Department of Emergency Services' role in the broadening of the Neighbourhood Watch Program?

Mr CUMMINS:

The Beattie Labor Government has committed \$300,000 over three years to broaden the role of Neighbourhood watch. In addition the Government will be providing \$1.65 million for community safety programs to raise awareness and understanding of community safety initiatives. These initiatives show the Governments commitment to providing safer and more supportive communities by improving personal and public safety, minimising the risk and impact of emergencies and disasters and addressing the social and economic causes of crime.

To encourage the development of strategies focusing on community safety, and in line with the Government priority of enhancing community safety, the Department of Emergency Services has formed a partnership with the Queensland Police Service to enhance the capability of communities to prevent crime and improve personal and community safety.

As a result of this partnership, a project building on the existing community-based Neighbourhood Watch program, has been developed.

The purpose of the Community Safety Project, jointly sponsored by Emergency Services Director-General Michael Kinnane and Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson, is to broaden the current crime prevention focus of the Neighbourhood Watch program, to incorporate a broader focus on community safety, particularly in the home.

The role undertaken by the Department of Emergency Services in broadening the Neighbourhood Watch program will include:

- Assisting the targeted Neighbourhood Watch group to survey their own community to identify a range of community safety issues.
- Assisting the community to identify and implement local solutions to local problems.
- In partnership with the Queensland Police Service, provide coordination and collaboration in the delivery of programs and the provision of resources.
- Implementing relevant community safety initiatives such as:
 - Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training.
 - Disaster preparedness and training.
 - Fire prevention and awareness.
 - Home safety and security audits.
- Developing skills and knowledge within the community to build capacity and to engage more effectively to achieve community outcomes.
- Assisting the community to understand both the opportunities and the constraints of working with Government.

The project was trialed in three Queensland Neighbourhood Watch communities over a three-month period in 2002 and was successful in demonstrating the value of community engagement in establishing community priorities and matching those priorities with agency priorities and resources.

Following the success of the trial, the project is currently being implemented in a further six Neighbourhood Watch communities throughout the State. These communities are located in Toowoomba, Upper Mount Gravatt, Riverview, Woodridge, Townsville and Edmonton.

Local project teams comprising a representative of the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service, the Counter Disaster and Rescue Services Division, the Queensland Police Service and representatives of Neighbourhood Watch have been established in each of these six communities.

These teams are currently working with their respective community to address local community safety issues identified in their community.

Some of the initiatives currently being undertaken in the six Neighbourhood Watch communities implementing the Community Safety Project include:

- CPR training of community groups and sporting clubs.
- Training of Neighbourhood Watch members as CPR Peer Trainers, to attend to the future CPR training of their community.
- Property engraving.
- Home safety and security checks.
- Kerbside numbering projects.
- Presentation of fire and injury prevention programs as well as personal protection programs in local school communities.

A key outcome of the Community Safety Project is the establishment of the Queensland's first Junior Neighbourhood Watch.

The program, targeted at the 80 Year 7 students of Harrisfields State School in Logan, is designed to develop skills and provide increased awareness of accident and injury prevention, crime prevention and personal safety and to encourage students to adopt the principles of the Neighbourhood Watch program, within both the school and the larger community.

The program will incorporate CPR, relevant first aid and fire safety training as well as a strong focus on both personal and community safety. The program will be delivered by local Police and Emergency Services personnel, with components of the program, particularly the CPR training, being delivered by qualified community members, under the Queensland Ambulance Service's CPR Peer Training program.

The success of the Community Safety Project in enhancing the safety and security of communities demonstrates the advantages of building local partnerships, enhancing existing community infrastructure and providing a coordinated response across Government.

The broadening of the Neighbourhood Watch program, through implementation of the Community Safety Project, is an excellent example of Government and the community working in partnership to create a safer Queensland.