



Speech by

# RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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## IPSWICH MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC INTOXICATION PROGRAM

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (5.10 p.m.): A couple of months ago the national media awoke into a frenzy of debate after it was revealed that the Victorian Community Services Minister had condoned supervised petrol sniffing at a shelter. The debate concerned the increasing rate of paint and petrol sniffing in Australian communities, both remote and urban. Many people argued that supervised sniffing was necessary because little had worked when it came to getting kids off petrol or paint. The only examples known of stopping kids sniffing petrol had been in the central desert, where children had been removed from their communities to out-stations. From Yuendumu they went to Mount Theo and from Hermansburg they went to Intjartmara.

Petrol and paint sniffing are a terrible curse. Sniffers become sexually and physically aggressive, they lose their sense of danger and can do themselves harm and in the longer term they can experience serious brain damage. In Alice Springs nursing homes house young people who are permanently impaired by petrol sniffing. To this debate, which assumes that little can be done about sniffing, Ipswich has something to say. In recent years the number of kids sniffing paint and hanging around causing trouble in Ipswich has plummeted from around 35 to fewer than 10. Not only have those kids stopped sniffing but also many have been helped off the streets, they have received an education and many have gained jobs. This success is no coincidence. It has resulted from the concerted and concentrated effort by the state government through the police and youth justice and from the council and welfare agencies, particularly Teen Care and Drug Arm.

About three years ago, a man was murdered by young people in the main street of Ipswich. The incident focused enormous attention on the city's safety and on the supervision and support of young people. The Beattie government's response was to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. We invested \$441,000 over three years and enlisted the support of the council, Drug Arm and other youth agencies. On the ground, police used Safe City cameras to patrol paint sniffing and constantly took away the paint. Shop owners were approached to remove spray paint from the shelves and Drug Arm patrolled the streets, often with local Aboriginal elders. They developed relationships with young people, took them home to keep them out of trouble at night and referred them to the many other support services involved.

As a direct result of this action, the streets of Ipswich are now a safer and more pleasant place to be. The centre of town is a public place and everybody has a right to be there. We also all have a responsibility to behave well towards others. Although a large number of young people were sniffing paint in town, those responsibilities were not being met. But we have been tough and we have addressed the causes of crime. To keep Ipswich peaceful we will have to be vigilant, but we have made a difference. I congratulate all of those involved in the Ipswich Management of Public Intoxication Program.