



QUEENSLAND CHILD PROTECTION WEEK – AWARD WINNER

Award Category: Education Initiative

Award Description: Development of an innovative approach, research or resource to promote child protection.

Winner: Darling Downs Crime Prevention Unit - Children's Safety Pantomime

BIO

Police in Pantomime...

Not the usual image held of Police – but 7697 students, parents and teachers in Toowoomba and surrounding areas know them in this way as the local police men and women volunteer their time, energy and talent to present the '*right messages*' to children in the Toowoomba city region... *their production is simply brilliant and the best part is, the kids take in the important messages...*

The Protective Behaviours Program is a major Qld Police Service program aimed at preventing abuse of children. Important safety concepts presented to children can provide them with the tools and information to do something when they feel unsafe. However, the challenge is how to present these to younger children and children with special needs. And their families and teachers.

For seven years, The Darling Downs District Crime Prevention Unit has partnered with a variety of schools and community groups to make sure an important message was delivered to young children. The groups have assisted with necessary resources and the result has been engaging across the community.

Protective behaviours messages have been adapted into a pantomime so that children can listen, watch, sing and talk with the characters and thereby use all the different learning styles to carry the messages. *The Woggles of Woggly Wood* present the personal safety messages, including information about personal safety and the safety hand. The police dress up in costumes which still allow their uniforms to be identified and children are given an opportunity to experience the police as approachable characters. This accessible format is based on interaction and enjoyment, because the best learning can be early and through fun activities.

The presentation is followed up by interaction with the characters to identify key messages again, and activity sheets provided for classroom follow up.

A snapshot of a pre and post evaluation conducted noted that parents reported 70% of the children talked about early warning signs at home after the pantomime (they spoke about the characters Goosebumps, Butterflies in Tummy, Wobbly Knees, Pounding Heart and Shivers); 58% talked about the safety hand and who they would identify as a safe person to talk to.

Location: Toowoomba

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