



commission for
children and young people
and child guardian

Presentation

by

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“Strong, smart and safe”

Celebration of the Negotiation Table

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Good morning. In addition to acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are gathered, the elders of the Cherbourg community, and the many distinguished guests here today, I would like to acknowledge some other important leaders among us:

- Gordon Fisher and Latifah Simpson, Cherbourg State School Captains
- Jo Ross, Principal of Cherbourg State School
- Teachers, parents and community members

The reason that Gordon and Latifah are important among this list of acknowledgments is that they, and the children and young people they represent as leaders, are part of the reason we are here today.

One of the things the Negotiation Table set out to do was build a good life for the children and young people of Cherbourg.

For this reason, and in my role as Commissioner for Children and Young People, I am excited to be sharing this celebration of the achievements of the Negotiation Table with you.

Commission's role

Like the members of the Negotiation Table, the Commission works towards a better life for Queensland children and young people.

The Commission helps all children and young people, but especially those who:

- can't protect themselves
- have no one to act for them
- live in out of home care or in a detention centre, or
- are disadvantaged by
 - disability
 - living in an isolated area
 - having no home
 - having no money

We help these children in a number of ways.

We listen to complaints children and young people might have about the ways in which services are doing their job.

For example, children should not be bullied or treated badly by others they have gone to for help.

It is important that whenever you have problems, you work hard to solve them with the people around you whose job it is to help.

But when things don't work out, children and young people can complain to the Commission if they feel that no one has listened to what they have to say or that they have not been treated fairly.

Sometimes, children and young people need to live away from home so that they will be safe from harm.

For example, sometimes mums and dads can have troubles. They can get sick, have fights or get drunk and not look after their kids properly.

Sometimes families need time apart so they work through their problems.

When this happens, Community Visitors from the Commission visit children living with foster carers, or in other types of out of home care. The Community Visitors make sure that these children's new homes are good places to be, that they are taken care of and can go to school.

We also visit children and young people in detention centres.

We also make sure that children and young people who need help from government departments are asked their feelings and opinions about their problems, and make sure that they are listened to when decisions are being made about their future.

Another thing we do at the Commission is work alongside communities who are building better lives for their children and young people.

We help organisations who provide activities to children to do that safely.

The Commission helps child care centres, sporting associations and church groups make plans so that they can manage risks to the children and young people they work with.

Cherbourg: Profile

Because the Commission works towards a better life for Queensland children and young people Cherbourg is an especially important community to us.

This is because there are so many children and young people here.

At the time of the 2001 census, there were 1 128 people living in Cherbourg. Of these people, almost half were aged under 15 years.

The Negotiation Table has developed plans to make Cherbourg a safer place for children and young people, and make sure that everyone knows that it is not ok for children to have to put up with abuse or violence at home or anywhere else.

The Negotiation Table wants the community as a whole to work towards making sure that alcohol and drugs don't make life bad for Cherbourg's children and young people.

Everyone has agreed that we must work on these things together. This is something to celebrate, and that's why we're here today.

Cherbourg's children: Strong and smart

The children and young people of Cherbourg are very special.

Cherbourg State School is famous for its strong and smart students.

Being strong and smart can help you stay safe.

When you are strong and smart you can make good decisions about your own life and stay out of the kinds of trouble that can threaten your health and wellbeing.

When you are strong and smart, you learn where to go to get help and have the courage to find it when you need it.

When you are strong and smart you take pride in your history and culture, and build upon it to create a great future both for yourself and for others in your family and community.

Your teachers, parents and community are working hard so that you can grow up strong and smart in Cherbourg.

They set high expectations for you.

They expect you to:

- respect yourself, and show respect to others.
- play and work safely.
- understand that violence of any kind is not allowed at school
- turn up, try your best and never give up.

Strong, smart and safe

However, when you're a child or young person, being strong and smart is not always enough.

You need adults in your family, school and community to watch out for you and make sure that you have all the things that you need:

- a good night's sleep
- healthy foods
- a home and community where you are safe from harm

Recently, I visited Cherbourg to meet and work with the Critical Incidents Working Group.

By being part of this group, I hope to contribute to the important work being done in Cherbourg to protect children and young people from harm.

The Cherbourg Negotiation Table has also taken particular interest in how Cherbourg's children and young people can be safer in their homes and community.

The plans developed by the Negotiation Table will be supported over time by the government departments represented here today, including the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian.

I look forward to leading the Commission's continued involvement with the Cherbourg Community, and watching your community – and all of the children and young people in Cherbourg - grow stronger, smarter and safer.

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