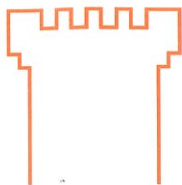


INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS

Organisation: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia
Name: Mr H Mouritz
Position: President
Telephone:
Date Received: 9/11/2005

Theme:

Summary



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SA:LLA November 8, 2005

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney 2000

Re: Inquiry into Public Disturbances at Macquarie Fields

Dear Sir,

We wish to thank you for your letter of October 7, 2005 inviting us to make a submission on the above Inquiry. While not really in a position to comment on all six points in the Terms of Reference, we would like to at least do so on Point 5. As you know, this invites expressions on the underlying causes and problems, which may have contributed to individual and collective acts of violence and social disorder.

Along with this brief submission attached, we have taken the liberty of enclosing the three publications mentioned in the report, for your perusal. We trust this will be of some assistance in your enquiries and thank you for inviting our comments.

Yours sincerely,

H. V. Mouritz
President

Enclosures (3)

Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Issues

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS

Submitted by:

Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Australia on behalf of Jehovah's Witnesses

November 8, 2005

In speaking with members of the Macquarie Fields community in their public ministry, Jehovah's Witnesses have frequently heard it said that so many young people in this area seem to have no direction in their lives. Consequently they live for the moment, with little thought for their future. Additionally, they have few if any guidelines or standards by which to live. Consequently they make their own, based on what they see their associates do. All of this leads to endless difficulties and frustrations.

Added to the above, it is well known that drug addiction is endemic in this area and many of the young people have been brought up with this cultural background. Individual young persons come to view this as "normal" and they meet many other youths with the same experience. The result is disaster on a collective scale. Extracting oneself from this scene is a major problem. However, it has been done and continues to be a source of amazement to those who have noted the dramatic change.

When the Macquarie Fields disturbances were at their peak, the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses arranged for a wide distribution of the enclosed issue of our international magazine, *Awake!* This was done in the area of the fatal car accident. As you will see, the feature article on the cover is entitled "Helping Teens in Trouble." We believe you will agree that what happened in Macquarie Fields is replicated in many other parts of the world and is of equal concern to these authorities. We received very favourable comments from many householders who

received and read this item. This journal now has an average printing of over 22 million in 85 languages.

In addition to the above, we have been circulating the excellent bound volume for young people entitled "Questions Young People Ask – Answers That Work." A brief look at the variety of chapters will reveal a wealth of thought-provoking information vital to youth and others in this violent age. We have had fine success in getting this book into homes around Macquarie Fields.

When visiting the homes in the area of the disturbance just after the events, a minister spoke to a householder who wanted to assure us that the type of behaviour was not typical of all residents. This particular householder explained that her family was given guidance and help in determining right standards and in choosing their associates. She said that the children were doing well in school education and were preparing for university.

A few months ago one of our staff here in Denham Court met two drug addicts in their thirties, both of whom have lived in Macquarie Fields all their lives. They have police records and also spent time in jail. Their style of life and appearance left much to be desired. A study of the Bible was commenced and very quickly dramatic changes began to take place. Both smoking and drug taking ceased. Their whole attitude toward both the community and authority adjusted to a remarkable degree. Even their appearance and manner of dress changed from slovenly to dignity and self-respect. And this has not been merely a temporary infatuation. They continue to show the same determination for almost one year.

We believe it is possible for many more from this environment to change their life style in spite of the environment and upbringing they have experienced. The educational program we are promoting engenders respect and submission to civil authority as mandatory for those who profess Christianity. On the other hand it also dignifies the family as the basic fabric of society which must be kept together. This is a huge problem in Macquarie Fields. It seems that little respect is shown to parents and this may in part be due to the very poor example young people see in the household. – The Bible at Romans chapter 13.

While the community in general decries the events and the attitude of those involved, the problem lies deeper than the Macquarie Fields experience. It is a problem pervading modern society in general. There is a general lack of standards and up-building moral guidance. The modern attitude to so-called “recreational” drugs and alcohol, the example sets by adults, and the parent’s desire for young people to enjoy their youth, is a prescription that omits the essential a set of values that give young people goals, and the guide them in making right decisions.

The publications we have endeavoured to circulate in the area include the book “The Secret of Family Happiness.” It deals with such topics as *Two Keys to Lasting Marriage*, *Protect Your Family From Destructive Influences*, *You Can Overcome Problems That Damage a Family*, and *Is There a Rebel in the House?* Very practical solutions are put forth. Publications such as these are studied with households with excellent and lasting results.