



Adjournment Speech

GLEN ELMES
Member for Noosa

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Wilful Negligence

Mr ELMES (Noosa--Lib) (10.52 pm): On Friday, 15 August I was honoured to be asked to colaunch a book with the member for Nicklin, Peter Wellington. The book is a teenage autobiography entitled *Wilful Negligence*. It was written under the pseudonym of Thadeus Hunt, who is now better known to everyone on the Sunshine Coast as Tony Herman.

I was given the book to read because of my interest in youth issues. On first glance at the cover I could see by the cut of the clothes and the appearance of the young boy in the picture that Tony Herman and I were of a similar vintage and out of the same era. However, the fact that we are of similar age is the only similarity between us. I grew up in Brisbane; Tony grew up in Sydney. My upbringing was through a close, caring family; Tony's was anything but. It just goes to show how easily a young person's life can go off the rails.

The book is a frightening journey of a young boy who gets up to a couple of pranks to shoplifting, theft on a larger scale and gang fights all the way through to drug use and heroin addiction. There is a powerful part of the book which describes how Tony's mother came upon him in the kitchen of their house just after he had injected himself with heroin. The frightening and realistic way in which that part of the book, indeed all of the book, is written will be a great wake-up call to anyone who reads *Wilful Negligence*. The book is an important message and shows clearly the dangers to young people as they grow up, whether it is in the 1960s or in the early part of the 21st century. I suggest that it is compulsory reading, particularly for teenage boys. I have read it cover to cover. I am going to make sure that my 17-year-old son reads Tony's book as well. It showed me how lucky I am not to be facing the same problems with him that Tony's mother and sister had to live through.

Luckily, Tony was one of the few who had the intestinal fortitude to dig himself out of the grave that could have been his. He and his wife and children have moved to Queensland. Tony now advises and is a role model for disadvantaged young people who attend Namtec in Nambour. I can well and truly recommend the organisation. I am one of those who firmly believes that young people should understand that there is a direct consequence of their actions. The current system, where endless warnings are given or in circumstances where a fine is imposed knowing that neither the young person nor the family has the capacity to pay, only leads to young people believing that they are 10-feet tall and bulletproof and can get away with anything.

I am of the opinion that a month in youth detention is a far better course of action than 12 months or longer in an adult prison. However, society must do everything possible to provide every assistance and encouragement to young people and their families to ensure that as few as possible have to travel the road to losing their freedom. I have taken the liberty of presenting a copy of Tony Herman's book, which was published in Queensland, to the Parliamentary Library and hope that some members of this House take the time to read it and recommend the book to young people in their electorates.
