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For immediate release

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **'Merrimac Makeover comes to the attention of local MP'**

Merrimac on the Gold Coast has been a very different place to live since residents decided to work together to 'make over' the community so that it would be a more child friendly. The changes have come to the attention of Ros Bates MP, State Member for Mudgeeraba.

Over the past eighteen months, hard working volunteers like Jill Waddell and Barbara Malcolm in conjunction with staff at the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) have put their energies behind the creation of the Merrimac Neighbourhood Watch scheme. Ms Bates will meet with the people who helped to create these changes on 1 March at 10.45am.

Initially the Merrimac Neighbourhood Watch Scheme concentrated on the production of a monthly newsletter. The newsletter focused on crime prevention and featured articles from local police and NAPCAN staff. Since then the group have increased their activities to include a family fun day; Christmas Carol performances and community meetings.

Catherine Baker, State Manager for NAPCAN commented, 'Research shows that one of the best ways to prevent child abuse and neglect is by building communities that support and value children and families. Merrimac has been a fantastic example of a community who has mobilized the residents to promote the well-being and protection of children. NAPCAN worked with the Merrimac Neighborhood Watch Scheme to develop a Child Friendly Action Plan to harness the strengths within this community. The end result is the creation of a child friendly culture for the people who live there. It has been wonderful to be part of the community's transformation.'

'Child Abuse is a really difficult issue for decision makers to tackle. I am looking forward to meeting with the members of the Merrimac Neighborhood Watch Scheme and the staff of NAPCAN to hear first hand how the community has worked together for the benefit of children in their area. Schemes such as this one help neighbors get to know each other, reduced crime and created an environment where our children can play safely knowing that the whole community has a shared sense of responsibility for their safety', said Ms Bates.

**Ends**

### **For further information please contact:**

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### **Notes to the editor:**

NAPCAN (National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect) is Australia's leading advocate for the prevention of child abuse and neglect. NAPCAN's goal is to bring about the changes necessary in individual and community behavior and in government policy to stop abuse and neglect before it starts.

NAPCAN also works directly with children and young people conducting innovative programs to strengthen protective behaviors build resilience and life skills. NAPCAN also assists 'at risk' parents through face-to-face programs and works in local communities building inclusive networks and strengthening local support of children and families.

A charity, NAPCAN is governed by a national board with the support of professional sub-committees and state and territory councils. For further information go to: [www.napcan.org.au](http://www.napcan.org.au)