



**John Hookings
28th November 1995**

Mrs PENFOLD (Flinders): I place on record the extraordinary support for youth given by an outstanding policeman, Constable John Hookings, of Streaky Bay, who in his own time and at his own expense has given the youth of Streaky Bay opportunities for socialising and for learning the art of sailing. When Constable John Hookings arrived in Streaky Bay in October 1992 there were no sailing activities at the sheltered seaport and no blue light discos. I am sure that all members are aware that police officers at their own expense run blue light discos as supervised entertainment for youth. John's first involvement was driving bus loads of children to blue light discos at Wudinna—a round trip of 298 kms. He assisted with supervision at the discos and then drove the children back to Streaky Bay, dropping them off at their homes.

In June 1993 Constable Hookings started a school intervention program, which addresses important issues involving police and youth. He speaks regularly to about 200 children from reception to year 12 in a program designed to encourage resistance to drug and alcohol abuse and to educate children to realise that the police are friends and not the adversary that some people make them out to be. The program has been warmly received by both the students and the community. In August 1993 John asked a class whether they would be interested in learning to sail, and two thirds of the class responded, causing him to telephone his various contacts around the State to lease or borrow a couple of sailing dinghies to get started.

Ross Haldane from Port Lincoln Yacht Club invited John and four children to participate in a sailing workshop at Port Lincoln the following month. The four children were selected from the 20 who wanted to go by drawing names out of a hat. It was the first time that any of the four had been sailing. The party camped in disused quarters above the Port Lincoln police station, rough but adequate. The group returned to Streaky Bay with two Holdfast trainers lent to them by the Port Lincoln Yacht Club.

Constable Hooking's reasons for being involved in sailing at Streaky Bay are: as a crime prevention strategy; to reintroduce sailing to Streaky Bay; to discourage children from drug and alcohol abuse; and to give children a supervised place to meet on Friday nights rather than hanging around outside the local hotel. Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. was the meeting time, and 12 children attended the first day of sailing on the second Sunday in September 1993. The children had never sailed, even though they had lived on the coast all their lives, and John found that it was necessary for him to get into the Holdfast trainer with them to show them how to sail. If members saw how big John is, they would realise how difficult this was with a crew.

In the following month (October 1993) Genevieve White, Junior Development Officer for Yachting SA, advised John of an old Heron sailing dinghy at Clayton, 850 kms away, which could be loaned to the club. John drove to Clayton, collected the boat and towed it back to Streaky Bay the following weekend and then spent six weeks refurbishing it to make it look like new. The children had an official launch, naming the dinghy Bay Cruiser. The addition of the Heron meant that eight children could be out on the water at the same time—four in the Heron and two in each of the Holdfast trainers. They were a bit squashed; however, the object was to have children sailing, and this was the only way to get them out on the water. The result was mayhem. None of the children could sail, and John realised that he was trying to get the children to run before they could walk. He could not be in three places at once. Even though John has been involved in sailing for a long time, it was his first attempt at teaching others to sail, but perseverance won out.

The group, called the Streaky Bay Police Sailing Squad, consisted of 12 children, aged from eight to 14 years, and Constable Hookings. The squad was given the use of an empty council building called the Shamble Shack, rent free, for clubrooms. This was a bonus for the squad, which had no bank account and no financial backing. Right from the start the children were encouraged to work as a team and to help each other. They lift the dinghies on to a cart at the Shamble Shack and then push the boats to the beach, which is about a kilometre away. There they rig the dinghies and go sailing. At the end of the day the children return the dinghies to the shack, wash down the equipment and pack everything away.

In April 1994 Constable Hookings began training nights every Friday from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. to teach the children basic sailing theory and how to tie knots. The following month they began refurbishing one of the Holdfast trainers, sanding back the hulls to bare wood. There has been 75 to 100 per cent attendance on these training nights, with some children who are not interested in sailing coming along just to work on the boat.

Insurance was a major concern. Inquiries showed that public liability insurance was too expensive for a group with no financial backing and no funds. The hurdle was overcome in June 1994 when the sailing scheme was incorporated with the blue light organisation and was renamed Streaky Bay Blue Light Incorporated. Its activities include sail training, boat handling, discos and camps. Having no rescue boat was another hurdle. A submission to Streaky Bay District Council resulted in Streaky Bay Foreshore Tourist Park, owned by the council, sponsoring a four metre rigid hull inflatable dinghy. Blancheport Fisheries, a local seafood processing company, sponsored a 25 horsepower outboard motor for the boat.

Streaky Bay Blue Light sailing team has represented the town three times in regional teams racing championships. It has been a good learning experience being involved in sailing at that level. In January this year Streaky Bay Kiwanis Club sponsored the purchase of two Puffin Pacers from Port Lincoln Yacht Club. Eighteen children aged from 5 to 17 years are now in the club. The children raised funds through catering and washing dishes at community functions to pay for a custom trailer to transport the rescue boat and two sailing dinghies. This will allow greater mobility for the children to compete in events.

While Constable Hookings praises the help given to him by Ross Haldane and Genevieve White particularly, this very positive work for the benefit of children and youth would not exist but for his commitment and enthusiasm. Since the start of the scheme just two years ago, Constable Hookings has conducted five blue light sail training camps and has introduced to sailing 40 children at Streaky Bay. Their present resources consist of seven boats in five classes. It would be greater value to have four or five boats of the same class. However, the first priority is to get the young people out on the water. The initiative and enthusiasm of Constable Hookings, his supporters and his team are to be commended, and are an example to us all. I know from my own children how the discipline, training, responsibility and team work needed to sail are qualities that are an excellent preparation for life.

In the time left, I want to speak about other opportunities in the electorate of Flinders. Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island are not all about agriculture and aquaculture: we have other advantages that visitors envy, and one of these is our national parks. I understand that my electorate has more national parks than any other electorate in the State. Again, the potential to market these attractions is only just being realised. The first concern is the protection of the environment, then comes the removal of feral animals and plants, and then planned public usage. Interest in the parks has been fostered through the Friends of the Parks program. These groups are invaluable in expanding and extending the work that rangers are able to do.

On Eyre Peninsula, neighbouring councils are integrating approaches to development of facilities for visitors so that people have a wide range of wilderness to explore. Walking trails head the top of the list. The Endeavour walking trail in Lincoln National Park will eventually encircle the park, allowing many kilometres of ocean coastline to be observed by walkers. Coffin Bay also has walking trails, and Elliston District Council is coordinating the development of rest and toilet facilities, especially in its coastal reserves. The State Government is a strong supporter of protection of the environment, as evidenced by a \$30 000 grant recently provided for a viewing platform at Point Labatt Conservation Park in the Streaky Bay District Council. Point Labatt is home to a breeding colony of Australian sea lions—one of the rarest seal species in the world, with distribution limited to South Australia and Western Australian coasts.

Observations by officers of the Department for Environment and Natural Resources since the 1960s noted a decline in the sea lion population, using Point Labatt. The erection of a stone wall in mid-1994 to prevent access to the beach reversed the trend and the restricted access, coupled with a viewing platform to protect the cliff edge, will see the sea

lion population continue to increase. Along with the unique flora and fauna of these parks and reserves, we present an area of international significance in ecotourism. I quote from a letter from a constituent, Mr Dennis Chinner, of Coffin Bay, as follows:

Your recent activities in conjunction with the Minister for the Environment were a good move.

Time expired.