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For immediate release

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **'Merrimac Makeover'**

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.

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.

Initially the group 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.

Jill Waddell, Editor for the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter commented, 'The Neighbourhood Watch scheme has transformed the community of Merrimac. Prior to the scheme most people within the community didn't know each other. Since the scheme was introduced we have gotten to know our neighbours, 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.'

Sasha Goodwin, Project Facilitator 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. I would be delighted to work with other community groups to bring about similar change.'

**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)