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13 September 2013

Chair, Education & Innovation Committee

Mrs Rosemary Menkens

Dear Mrs Menkins,

My name is Brian Cresswell. I am the father of four children, two of who attend [REDACTED] and the other two attend [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. I have a passionate interest in your current "*Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Bill*".

As a parent of 6 children who have attended [REDACTED], I do understand and support the moves to strengthen powers relating to suspension, exclusion and so on. My concern for both primary and secondary schools, is that the Bill will only be dealing with what happens after students have grossly breached school disciplinary boundaries. Much more important, in my view is, the set of tools/resources available to schools to prevent such breaches from occurring in the first place.

The following are sad facts in my humble opinion:

- Behaviour management is the single biggest problem in most, if not all primary and secondary schools/classrooms that my children attend/have attended.
- Primary and Secondary schools do not always have staff allocated to manage this aspect of life. It is left to Teachers, Principals, and others to fit in around teaching and learning and everything else.
- I have witnessed, both in the school grounds and classrooms, and at home, what impact ill disciplined children can have on disciplined children who genuinely want to go and learn.
- I will always maintain that all children have the right to an education.
- But first and foremost, all children should have the right to an education in a safe environment.
- I have witnessed firsthand what effects ill disciplined children have on disciplined children.
- They have the potential amongst other things to emotionally, physically and psychologically abuse disciplined children.
- I have had some of my kids have to miss out on days of education at a time due to such abuse.
- In the case of [REDACTED], the P&C has only 3 executive members. This makes their job all the harder. If for whatever reason, the likes of the Qld P&C failed to ensure the [REDACTED] was notified of such an inquiry, it is all the harder for the likes of under resourced P&C's to make the wider parent body aware

Unruly and ill disciplined children are usually the by-products of a dysfunctional family or poor parenting practices. Schools need to be supplied with additional staff to address Behaviour Management issues.

Additionally, there should be more factoring and focus on the victims of ill disciplined children, including:

- Parents being notified if their child has been exposed to, or have been the recipient of an ill disciplined child's actions, irrespective of what category the exposure has been classified as.
- Schools ensuring ill disciplined children are not placed in a classroom with children who genuinely would like to learn in a safe environment. (At one of the schools my children attend they segregate ill disciplined children in the playground from the disciplined by making them play in a supervised area)
- Schools utilising the current resources such as notifying the Qld Police Child Protection Unit (CPIU) to intervene for abuse and assault.
- Schools notifying Qld Workplace Health & Safety if breaches occur.
- Notifying parents of what options are open to them.
- Schools using tools like assemblies, newsletters, emails and the P&C to keep the wider parent community aware of ill disciplined children
- Schools promotion of websites which address bullying (eg. The Alannah & Madeline Foundation which is in partnership with EQ-DETE)
- Schools ensuring any school based police officers make regular announcements at assemblies regarding ill discipline
- Regional Directors ensuring all schools within his region are being pro-active in ensuring all literature available on EQ-DETE websites relating to bullying and violence are reinforced by schools
- Regional Directors ensuring all schools within his region are being pro-active in ensuring all literature available on EQ-DETE websites relating to bullying and violence are made available on school websites.
- Schools ensuring they notify the wider parent body and ensure they are informed of consultative processes when the likes of Behaviour Plans are reviewed.

I wish you committee well in your deliberations

Yours faithfully

Brian Cresswell