



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 16 September 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Anti-bullying Program

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.49 a.m.), by leave: Irrespective of its size, its location or the socioeconomic levels of families, bullying in some form or other occurs in almost every school where students play, work and learn together. In fact, bullying occurs in every situation where humans of all ages and interests interact. Bullying—the systematic intimidation of others by coercion or threats—has no place in our schools. In July, I announced the establishment of an anti-bullying task force. Since then the task force has begun to tackle the problem of bullying through a three-pronged approach. The three parts of that program are—

1. sharing successful anti-bullying strategies;
2. providing resource materials to school staff and community members;
3. ensuring that all schools have in place their own anti-bullying programs.

Let me address the first point. A series of workable solutions has been gathered and documented, and will be published through Education Queensland's Intranet and the Internet. These strategies will also be publicised through the department's newsletter, Education Views, which reaches all 1,300 State schools and has a distribution of almost 50,000 every fortnight. To date over 150 primary, secondary and special schools have provided an outline of the strategies they use to minimise bullying. At the recent anti-bullying conference run by QUT, Dr Philip Slee—perhaps Australia's foremost expert on the matter—called for a national register of anti-bullying strategies. Dr Slee told me that he saw the Queensland initiative as a first step to that objective. I have responded by instructing my department to prepare a paper for the next Education Ministers Council, outlining the Queensland initiatives towards a national register.

The second point I made was in regard to providing school staff with resource materials. A professional development package including videotapes and manuals will be distributed in September to all schools. This package is intended for use with students, parents, teachers, principals and administrators, non-teaching staff, and other members of the school community. It is designed to help raise awareness about bullying and develop an understanding of its nature. That in turn will guide preventive responses to these issues. It is also intended to make students and others affected by bullying more aware of safety issues. The third point is with regard to making sure all schools have in place anti-bullying programs. Schools are required to review their behaviour management practices during 1998. I have requested that in undertaking this work special attention be paid to anti-bullying strategies.

I am committed to achieving a cultural change in our schools. Bullying behaviour is extremely damaging both for the perpetrator and the victim. It can leave permanent and quite severe emotional scars that affect people throughout their lives. The campaign to stop bullying must become inextricably linked with managing student behaviour. It must become an issue that school communities can work on together to ensure our students become active, informed, and responsible citizens of the future.