



Speech by

LINDA LAVARCH

STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

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HEAD LICE

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (10.19 a.m.): A great many mothers in my electorate and, indeed, across Queensland are fed up. They are sick and tired and are being reduced to tears of frustration. Members may ask what is causing such stress and anguish. The answer is: head lice. Some may view head lice as a trivial matter, but for the mothers in Kurwongbah, and throughout Queensland, who are finding head lice almost incurable, it is of utmost concern. To spend the time and the pain of treating their children only to find, a week or two later, that they are reinfested with head lice is causing not only frustration but also anger.

Although head lice can be contracted anywhere by anyone, it is most common in our primary schools. Unfortunately, the official line of the Department of Education—that it recognises that infestations of head lice can occur in schools but that it is considered to be a health issue and parents have the prime responsibility for detection and treatment— incenses most parents. The P & C of one of my schools considers that the Education Department should be more proactive in working to eliminate head lice.

In a recent letter, it has made the following suggestions. It suggests a continuing education program for parents who are coming through who do not understand the problem. It also suggests that there be a strengthening of the overarching legislation to allow schools: to inspect a child's hair with or without their parent's permission and note that detailed inspection is required, not a casual look without physical contact; the ability to insist that an infected child cannot be readmitted to the school without passing an inspection; and that sufficient resources be provided to manage this matter without further loading teaching staff.

Whilst I recognise that there is work being done by the Departments of Education and Health, that strategies are being developed by Queensland Health and that these are presently being trialled in some schools, I also recognise that a lot work is being done by Professor Rick Speares of the James Cook University. His work——

Time expired.
