



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

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EDUCATION FACILITIES, BARAMBAH ELECTORATE

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (7.25 p.m.) Concerns regarding the education facilities and educational working conditions in the Barambah electorate are providing many opportunities for teachers, parents and students to speak out. At a recent enterprise bargaining meeting of teachers of the South Burnett area, several motions were moved and carried by the large number of teachers at the meeting. The first motion, and perhaps the greatest indicator of the mood of those gathered there, was—

"That this meeting condemns the Department and the Government for their persistent failure to establish an enterprise bargaining position and negotiate with the union."

As I said, that motion was carried.

The meeting also carried motions that the Queensland Teachers Union be urged to reject the Government offer on the basis that it is inadequate in terms of salary outcomes and does not address any of the fundamental working/learning issues contained in the QTU claim.

The teachers have demands placed upon them every day. These are demands which were unheard of a few years ago. Most teachers are proud of their work and endeavour to be professional and maintain professional standards, but they are finding the Government's lack of ability to address the issues frustrating and they are fast losing their patience.

Staffing levels and facilities are being stretched to the point where performance will be jeopardised by lack of Government funding. The concerns of teachers involve not just wages but working conditions, staffing levels, behavioural management and others.

The behavioural management concerns are—

Mr Sullivan: This is the first time you've stood up for the unions. Have you had a conversion?

Mrs PRATT: I always stand up for what is right. Behavioural management concerns are rated as a high priority by parents whose children attend schools in the communities. They have sons and daughters who are the recipients of abuse. They often have to suffer repeated incidences of aggressive student behaviour towards themselves and other students. The offending children have often been involved in behavioural management programs such as the Responsible Thinking program or have been rated as a "mainstream" student, which necessitates constant supervision of the child. Even with this intense supervision the children sometimes still manage to reoffend. It is not the teachers' obligation to babysit these repeat offenders.

Parents of the students attacked by these young offenders have reported the necessity to have their child assessed for trauma by a psychologist. There have been reported instances of having to have the children treated at local hospitals for bruising and checked for possible broken bones. I have received reports that parents have asked about, and obtained, home schooling for their children because they no longer feel that the school system can protect their child whilst that child is in the school's care. There have also been reports of not only the child or children being physically abused, but the parents, when taking their concerns to the school, have been verbally abused by the offending child as well. I would like to quote from a letter presented to me by one very concerned parent—

"I now have to stay with my child at school to ensure her safety as the principal has told me he cannot guarantee this will not happen again."

She then goes on to ask—and rightly so—

"What happened to his duty of care for my child?"

I have received copies of letters sent to principals by parents. I have been told verbally of reports to principals. I have seen the bruising on children who are afraid to go back to school. I have also seen the frustration of the parents who feel that nothing is being done to protect their child.

I have spoken to psychologists who, commenting on some abusive children's behaviour, state that there must come a time when the abusive child's welfare must not outweigh that of the many that he or she abuses.

This abusive behavioural problem is not a new one. It is not an easy one to resolve, but it is one that cannot be swept under the carpet. The Responsible Thinking program will work for some students, but it does not work for all. There are, unfortunately, some students who do not belong in the school environment. Students who want to learn and who want to enjoy their school years without enduring the unwanted attention of a child with a behavioural problem are being forced to change schools or undertake home schooling, whilst the child with the behavioural problem remains and chooses another victim. There comes a time when that child has to be removed from the school environment.
