



Speech by

**Hon. J. FOURAS**

**MEMBER FOR ASHGROVE**

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Hansard 24 August 1999

### **SCHOOL BULLIES**

**Hon. J. FOURAS** (Ashgrove—ALP) (10.05 a.m.): Just recently, three primary schools in my electorate invited parents to a training night on bullying. We all know that bullying has a great impact on the high suicide levels amongst young people in our community. It also impacts very largely on decreasing education outcomes for those who are bullied.

The latest Education Department figures for 1997-98 indicate that there were 5,800 suspensions or exclusions in State schools, of which 1,780 involved primary school students. Those suspensions were for physical harassment or physical violence against other students or teachers. This includes intimidation, rough handling, hitting, kicking, punching or throwing things.

There is no doubt that children from indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds are prime targets for bullying. They are being bullied more frequently and more severely across longer periods. Boys are the main victims of assaults and threats.

Bullies tend to be confident, aggressive and uncaring, putting pay to the theory that they are insecure at heart and cowards to boot. The scary thing is that bullies seem to be home grown, for the very factors that make some people standover men are just the qualities that some dads see as admirable in their kids. Victims tend to be quiet, passive kids with few friends, who do not know how to respond. They are ashamed of what is happening to them and do not tell adults, some of whom tend to blame them for their own problems.

At the information night a number of parents spoke of their own school bullying traumas and their inability to tell their parents. They expressed serious concern that their children were being bullied, but that they were not being made aware of it.

Good advice was given about what to do if bullied. It was very simple: look the bullies in the eye, be calm and either try to make friends or just walk away confidently. Unfortunately, for some it is not as simple as that.

I congratulate the Education Minister for allocating \$16m to schools for behavioural management and bullying programs.

Time expired.

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