



Speech by

**KEN TURNER**

**MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA**

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### EDUCATION

**Mr TURNER** (Thuringowa—IND) (7.20 p.m.): I spend a lot of time in my electorate talking to parents, children and teachers. All agree that our education system needs to be overhauled, and some important points recur during every conversation. Many classes have 35 pupils and teachers feel they can cope with only 20 in order to give them maximum attention. Smaller classes would lead to higher literacy and numeracy skills among students. Teachers are underpaid for the long hours they work, and they are expected to perform a parenting role that should be done in the home—all of which is causing stress to many staff members.

Our teachers were once highly regarded in our community, but now they are seen as incompetent and ineffectual in their work. They are often blamed for the attitudes of the young. These dedicated people are not to blame; it is the system they have to work under that is to blame. Boys in particular are being pressured by their peers to underachieve and to not learn even basic reading and writing skills. We have had teachers tell us that boys will secretly hand in assignments so that their mates do not know. This is school bullying at its worst. This attitude is developing into a cult image.

I suggest that thought be given to an advertising campaign to raise the image of teachers in the community and to tell kids that it is cool to learn and be successful. Suspending children from school as punishment may be beneficial to teachers and fellow students who are being disrupted, but what effect does it have on the suspended students, their families and the community in the long term? It is often like a holiday to the disruptive student, and this is not effective behaviour management. I suggest a school sinbin to which students would be sent for each day of their suspension so that the habit of going to school is not broken. Perhaps then they may have a chance of being rehabilitated back into the classroom.

Education in Queensland is at crisis point. Many of our children are leaving the schooling system after 12 years without the basic literacy and numeracy skills to take them into the workplace. Without these basic skills many are unable to find work and this in turn puts a strain on the economy which could last the lifetime of the unemployable person. Money needs to be spent on the school system now in order to save money on the social security system in the long term. We must attack the problem where it begins.

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