



Speech by

LINDY NELSON-CARR

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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HEAD LICE

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (10.26 a.m.): Some months ago I told this House of an insidious plague that was sweeping through our regions. It was the plague that continues to reach epidemic proportions and affects all primary school children. Of course, I refer to head lice.

In attempting to eradicate this unacceptable blight on our schools and families, traditionally we have been met with all the reasons why nothing can be done: health problems from treatment, cost, abrogation of parental responsibility and so on. The fact that head lice infestation has long been recognised as a health issue in schools with enormous community costs both emotionally and economically means that it is time that we as a Government did something positive towards prevention. It is time that we had the commitment and desire to respond in a supportive way.

My electorate comprises a number of large primary schools. I have regular meetings with staff and P & Cs in discussing ways in which we can be proactive in overcoming this huge and ugly problem. I believe that the schools in my electorate have led the way in taking a stand to address the problem. I have been part of the process and am very familiar with all of the issues. I am proud to be part of a growing team of parents and teachers who are determined to overcome the head lice problem.

The research carried out by Associate Professor Rick Speare of the JCU is not only critical in studying the efficacy of head lice treatments but also his commitment to assisting schools in their campaign has put Townsville well and truly on the map in tackling this serious social problem. The parents and teachers in Townsville of whom I speak have gone past the emotive phase where stigma and marginalisation have their roots. They have taken up the gauntlet in a professional and organised manner, meeting with me on a regular basis and urging the Education and Health Departments to pursue avenues of eradication in a cohesive and committed manner.

This Government is an inclusive Government where the processes in decision making include the general population. We have enormous success in community forums and public opinion is highly regarded. I urge all of us as community leaders to take seriously this public health and education issue and find ways to eradicate the problem as soon as possible. A day of action must be on the agenda.
