



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

Hansard 15 March 2000

LIFE EDUCATION CENTRES

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (6.15 p.m.): I rise to second the amendment to the motion moved by the Minister for Education. Drugs are an unfortunate feature of modern day life. The Government has an unquestionable responsibility to equip our children with the skills and knowledge necessary for them to deal with the challenges associated with drugs in the community. Governments, parents and the community must work cooperatively together to combat this very real problem in our society.

The fact that there are people in our community prepared to assist our children with drug education is a very good thing. Those people are to be commended for their efforts and their diligence. It is important, however, that all our efforts are constantly reviewed so that as the nature of the problem changes so, too, does the response. From time to time, changing circumstances and different challenges will of course necessitate a different response. It is important for this Government to look to the experience of other States so we get the very best outcome for our children.

Life Education is a single, one-off presentation. School vans visit some schools perhaps once a year. However, as the Minister outlined, the agreed principles of drug education state that programs for our children should be ongoing, comprehensive and developmentally appropriate. It is the view of the experts throughout the country that separate and isolated programs do not represent a sound curriculum. It would appear that many Queensland schools agree. Not all schools in the franchised areas covered by Life Education use the program. Not all schools agree that this is the program for them, clearly agreeing with the experts. For example, only 10 schools in the Hervey Bay/Maryborough area used the Life Education programs in 1998-99.

Life Education is mainly a primary school program and not frequently used by secondary schools. Drug education needs to be embedded in the school curriculum. I am convinced that a comprehensive approach to the problem is best. We need to make sure that all our children have access to high quality, ongoing and accurate drug education. An infrequent visit by the Life Education van is, in most cases, simply not enough. We need a curriculum in Queensland to equip teachers with the skills to deliver drug education as part of other policy areas, such as behaviour management. It has been necessary to develop procedures and implement curriculum to bring about desired educational outcomes for all students in relation to drugs. This Minister and this Government are to be commended for their efforts so far. A comprehensive approach such as this ultimately decreases the need for schools to draw extensively upon external resources.

It is mischievous for the member for Redlands to suggest that the Government has cut Life Education adrift, that the Government is denying Life Education vans access to schools, that the Government is in any way removing the Life Education program as an option for school communities. The services that the Life Education organisation offer to our schools will remain available for school communities to choose.

In 1998-99, this organisation was funded to the tune of \$520,000, an increase of almost 15% on the previous year. The organisation was always aware that funding was not assured beyond 1998-99. The Life Education Centre Foundation Queensland Inc. received \$1.3m over three years. Education Queensland, through the implementation of the health and physical

education syllabus for all State schools, including a professional development and training CD-ROM for every teacher, will be accomplished at a cost of \$1.7m over three years.

Importantly, even the best intentioned, highly entertaining one-hour visit should not replace or draw funds away from the provision of ongoing, sequenced programs selected and delivered by classroom teachers. Teachers, the professionals, are in the best position to know and cater for the individual needs of their students and to plan for the achievement of particular educational outcomes. An argument that this Government is not focused on providing the best possible drug education to Queensland schoolchildren is simply not sustainable.
