



Speech by
**Mr DENVER
BEANLAND**

MEMBER FOR INDOOROOPILLY

Hansard 15 March 2000

LIFE EDUCATION CENTRES

Mr BEANLAND (Indooroopilly—LP) (6.40 p.m.): The Government's amendment to this motion moved by the Opposition highlights the lack of commitment of this Government to fighting drug use in this State. The Minister, in his speech and in his amendment, said nothing about how much the Government is going to spend on drug education. Instead, we just heard a lot of waffle, gibberish and nonsense from the Minister. He gave no indication at all of how much this Government is going to spend on drug education.

The fact is that the Government is cutting the Life Education program; its expenditure on drug education will be zero. Queensland will go from spending the least on drug education at 50c per student down to zero, compared with Victoria, which spends \$10 per student on drug education. That comparison speaks for itself and tells the exact situation.

At one stage, the Minister said that we spend \$82 per State school student on drug education. I notice that tonight in this Chamber he did not repeat that claim. If we spent that much money per student on drug education, it would total \$38m. If we are spending \$38m, everyone wants to know where it is being spent. That was just a lot of nonsense—a throwaway line by the Minister to try to dig himself out of a hole.

The member for Rockhampton, who spoke after the Minister, also had little to say. I understand that the people in Rockhampton are fighting vigorously to retain this program. They want the Government to fund it again. They are giving the member for Rockhampton a lot of flak over the whole issue. If the member really supports the program, then he should be allowed to vote with the coalition this evening. He should show the people of Rockhampton where he stands, instead of having one foot on each side of a barbed wire fence. It must be getting fairly difficult for the member to sustain that balancing act, and I am sure he is feeling very sore after standing with one foot on each side of the barbed wire fence. If the pressure is so great, then he should be allowed to vote with the Opposition.

I notice that earlier Minister Wells engaged in some selective quoting. Of course, he forgot to say that Life Education national director, Dr Tony Metherall, stated that—

"... the claims against the programme were 'dishonest' as the research data was old (1991) and the programme had since been changed twice.

The programme is now much more skills-based than knowledge-based, which prepares the students to make informed decisions."

Dr Metherall stated further—

"... Life Education ... was the most evaluated drug education programme in Australia and had produced 'dramatic effects' in some areas including the marked reduction in Year 7 girls taking up smoking."

Those quotes are contained in the document that was tabled in this House by the Minister less than an hour ago. So the Minister has engaged in very selective quoting to promote his position.

However, at no time did the Minister mention what the Government is going to do. At no time did the Minister mention what funding is going to be made available. We are not talking about philosophies; we are talking about real life, tragic situations—real life issues. We are talking about the scourge of modern society that is drugs. It is about time that this Minister for Education woke up to himself and realised what is occurring in the broader community. It is a sad situation in which we continue to get mixed messages. Instead of the Government getting out there and fighting drugs and sending a clear message to young people in our community that this Government's goal is to have a drug-free society and to educate people about the problems of drugs, this Government simply goes to water.

The figures that were produced by Education Queensland prove that the 50c per student spent on drug education is not something that somebody has made up; it is from Education Queensland's own reports. That figure should be compared with the \$10 per student that is spent on drug education in Victoria. That document was produced by Education Queensland in June 1999. Queensland has the lowest expenditure on drug education of any State. Due to the disbanding of this central source of expenditure, the amount spent on drug education in Queensland is now zero. I am referring to the Government's own figures and nobody else's. Those figures speak for themselves.

The AMA indicated that it was horrified that this Government was reducing to zero the expenditure on fighting drugs in this State. Education is a very important part of the overall drug program. Surely a fundamental feature of a Government's overall drug strategy has to be to say to young people that it is cool to be clean, that they ought not to be touching drugs of any sort, and to educate them on the problems that are created in society if they start down the track of taking drugs. Very clearly, this Government has a motto: it can't do. When it comes to drug education, it can't do. Again this evening, that motto has been reaffirmed by this Minister.

Time expired.
