



Speech by

Mrs D. PRATT

MEMBER FOR BARAMBAH

Hansard 18 July 2000

SCHOOL STUDENT EXPULSION

Mrs PRATT (Barambah—IND) (10.13 a.m.): A 13-year-old boy, full of hormonal turbulence and typical new teenager cheek, finds himself in rather serious trouble for the first time in his short life. He has been caught in the school grounds trading a bit of marijuana. It is his first offence. The police are called, and after interviewing the lad, they caution him but lay no charges. His parents are called. They realise their son has made a big mistake. I have no doubt they cautioned him also, as strenuously as most parents would.

And the school—did it caution him too? No. It excluded him from school for a period of time, and rightly so. According to the Education Department guidelines, a principal could exclude him for up to five days. That would have seemed a fair price to pay for a 13-year-old's first mad moment of folly, wouldn't it? Education Queensland did see fit to expel this young man from school, but not for five days; it expelled him for two years. Where in the name of reason—which is apparently sadly lacking in Education Queensland—is the justification for such a sentence?

This boy is in Year 8. His parents have hastened to enrol him in distance education because they are committed to giving him an education. But herein lies the contradictory nature of Education Queensland. State school principals openly state their contempt for home schooling. In such a situation a child does not have the opportunity to mix with other children, to learn team spirit and so on. It is important for children to attend school, the Government says. It is compulsory for children to be educated. But the Government expelled a 13-year-old Year 8 boy for two years for a first offence.

A quick glance through the Magistrates Court section of our local newspaper was educational. The oldest drug offender was 38 years old, and no-one will convince me that it was his first offence. He received a \$300 fine with three months to pay. The severest penalty went to a 20-year-old man for possession of a dangerous drug—\$900 with six months to pay. Compare this with a 13-year-old schoolboy on his first offence being suspended from school for two years.

I would like Education Queensland to make up its mind. Is education compulsory or not? Does it want children to attend school or does it not?

Time expired.
