



Speech by

Hon. K. LINGARD

MEMBER FOR BEAUDESERT

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APPROPRIATION BILL [No. 2]; APPROPRIATION [PARLIAMENT] BILL [No. 2]

Hon. K. R. LINGARD (Beaudesert—NPA) (5.42 p.m.): This bill allocates \$166 million to education. This morning I asked the Minister for Education a question regarding the suspension programs, and the article is virtually on the front of the paper. I see the suspension problem as one of the greatest problems facing education at present. There is no doubt that I was a great supporter of the corporal punishment methods that all high school principals used quite a while ago, and in looking for an alternative method I suppose I never, ever thought of any method other than corporal punishment, which, used effectively and correctly by the school principal himself, was a very effective program in most schools, especially for boys. I do notice that at present about 85 per cent of suspensions in schools are for boys. So the ratio between boys and girls in trouble has remained the same and, quite obviously, corporal punishment was an excellent program as far as these boys were concerned.

The difficulty has occurred because, in looking for an alternative method to corporal punishment, everyone just wanted to get rid of corporal punishment but no-one had an effective behavioural management plan. So, in considering a plan, they decided that a high school principal would be able to suspend via two particular methods. The first method was one to five days, and the second method was six to 10 days. The authorities said that, if a principal suspended for between one and five days, there was no need for any alternative programs. But if it was for six to 10 days, then the high school principal had to provide an alternative program, and a program had to be provided in the community. Now the result is inevitable. High school principals are now allowed to suspend for between one and five days. As long as they notify the parents in some way, that is effective as far as they are concerned. If a school principal suspends for between six and 10 days, he must find and provide an alternative program, and such programs are costly.

So what we now find in all our records—if the records were kept—is that most students are suspended for between one and five days. It is easy for a school principal to suspend for between one and five days, but the difficulty is that there is no rehabilitation program for those young people. It is not a preventive program at all. If one goes to any high school, one notices the difference in the attitudes of students and teachers. Even more importantly, there seem to be umpteen students who are supposedly under the control of their parents wandering the streets for those one to five days. They are under absolutely no supervision at all. Most members would acknowledge that in our day we liked to go to school. Unfortunately, we tend to believe that all students like to go to school, and we believe that if they are suspended it will hurt them. Well, clearly it does not hurt them. Clearly, these children are quite happy to spend one to five days running around the streets, supposedly under the control of their parents.

This leads to all sorts of discipline problems in the form of shoplifting, general misbehaviour, stealing and so on. The Education Department is virtually forced to turn a blind eye to what is happening. There is no doubt that the Minister for Education has had to try to protect the Education Department with respect to the particular problems she faces, as reported on the front page of today's *Courier-Mail*. No record is being kept. There is no cumulative record of how many students are being suspended and which students are being suspended. We find that students are going from suspension to suspension. If I missed one or two days when I was at high school, it was difficult to go back on the third day. These children are returning after a week away and trying to fit into the school program, but it is not working.

If a very disruptive student needs a six to 10 day suspension, there are very few places in the community where a school principal can send that student. We have always said that we did not want these students joining existing programs run by Family Services. It has always been our contention that the education system should set up alternative programs for these students. That is not being done. The Education Department and the minister talk about behavioural management money being given to regions and about behavioural management money being given to groups of schools. But this money is not enough to set up alternative programs, rehabilitation-type programs, for these students to attend. I am impressed with the alternative school projects. However, at present there are only five such facilities in Queensland. One is at Logan, one is at Capalaba, one is at Ipswich, one is at Deception Bay and one is at Cairns. I speak very highly of the one at Logan.

My old high school, Kingston High, runs three such programs and there is no doubt that they are producing excellent results. Certainly, it is suitable for those students having difficulty at school who want to leave school and take up a program that would lead towards some sort of employment. However, the difficulty is that it is limited to 14 to 15 students, and these programs are all full at present. So whilst the minister might talk about alternative school programs being available for these students, these alternative school programs cannot be accessed by the students and by the schools. If the minister were quite honest she would agree that the suspension program in the one to five day category has gone berserk. There are umpteen kids on the streets. There are umpteen kids not attending school. In the six to 10 day category, no alternative program is available to the one in the five areas that I mentioned. In those five areas these programs are full, so other schools cannot access them. If members know where Kingston High School is, they will know how difficult it is to get there. People at Browns Plains, Marsden, et cetera cannot get these students to those sorts of facilities. So I believe that, of the money that has been allocated to the education system, a lot more needs to be spent on the suspension program.

Once again, I make a passing comment about what is happening at BoysTown. I am sure that in the next few weeks people will see that the programs offered in south-east Queensland are virtually mini-institution programs. This government has given a former administrator of BoysTown \$2 million to set up alternative programs in the northern part of Logan. What is he doing? He is virtually brokering it out to similar groups which run programs similar to those that BoysTown used to run but, of course, now they must set up these mini-institutions. Here we have a magnificent place such as BoysTown that on 7 December becomes completely vacant. It is not to be used at all, except by the De La Salle Brothers. If De La Salle Brothers want to run these types of programs for the suspension program, they will find that they will not have enough students. One needs 50 to 60 boys to really make a program at BoysTown viable. I hope that some of this education money in the appropriation bill is spent on alternative programs and on behavioural management programs that try to overcome the great problem in our schools that is caused by the suspension of students.
