



Speech by

**BONNY BARRY**

**MEMBER FOR ASPLEY**

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Hansard 12 November 2003

**EDUCATION [GENERAL PROVISIONS] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms BARRY** (Aspley—ALP) (9.37 p.m.): I rise to support the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill. The object of the bill, as the minister indicated in her second reading speech, is to ensure that our schools are the safe, secure learning environments and workplaces that our community expects and deserves. The bill inserts into the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 a new part that empowers appropriate persons—that is, state school and non-state school principals, non-state school governing bodies and the chief executive of the Department of Education—to give people directions or orders about their conduct or movement on school premises, including orders to leave or to not enter the school premises. The provisions cannot be exercised against students, employees, contractors and subcontractors who are engaged to perform work at the school.

The regime introduced provides a range of orders and prohibitions that range from 24 hours up to one year. In the case of those particular prohibitions, the decision makers must be progressively more highly placed in the organisational structure. For example, the principal of a state school can make an order excluding a person from the school premises for 24 hours but an exclusion of more than that—up to 60 days to one year—must be sought by the chief executive officer.

As a member of the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee and from looking at the *Alert Digest* that was tabled in this place, I note that the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee talks about the impact of these provisions on the rights and liberties of individuals. It notes that non-state schools operate on private property and that state schools, whilst they operate on land owned by the state, in general operate on land to which the general public would normally have unrestricted access. Indeed, given the presence of children at such places and the clear obligation on school authorities to provide them, as well as school teachers and other school staff, with appropriate protection, the Scrutiny of Legislation Committee indicates that the conferral of express statutory powers of conduct, regulation and exclusion does not appear unreasonable.

The Scrutiny of Legislation Committee also indicates the distinctive position of parents. The act imposes upon parents an obligation to ensure the enrolment and attendance of their children at school each day, so parents could be said to have a reasonable expectation of access to school premises. However, the committee does understand that a parent whose behaviour is threatening, dangerous or inappropriate should not be permitted to come into the school even for this purpose. It talks specifically about possible arrangements being made whereby children who have excluded parents would be taken into the custody of teachers at the boundary of the school premises. The committee also notes that the provisions are not just restricted to parents but encompass any person other than those noted to be students, employees, contractors or subcontractors and, therefore, notes it will be extended to outsiders who simply intrude on the school premises. The bill will not, however, prevent the entry of those persons who have a legitimate reason for entry.

In the electorate of Aspley we have some very large schools, as one would expect within a metropolitan electorate. Trespass is a real issue for many of my schools. It is particularly complicated by the fact that the facilities are used increasingly by members of the community. That is a really good thing, but it means that there are more and more strangers on the premises who are perhaps not familiar to the people at the schools and their neighbours. Many people use schools as a way of short cutting because they simply do not want to go around the large grounds, but there are, indeed, people who are intent on mischief and more serious damage.

In many schools there is a real problem with graffiti and theft. It is inherent upon many of my schools—and I commend them for this—to adopt strategies to counter these problems. One thing that I have noticed is probably the most effective is the encouragement of students to feel a real ownership of their schools. Where students are involved in the protection of their school through their own school leadership, there is ultimately a sense that the school belongs to them and it is important that it is not damaged.

Contributing to this sense of ownership is the secondary renewal funding program. The electorate of Aspley has received over \$6 million in secondary renewal to Pine Rivers State High School and Aspley State High School. The secondary renewal fund has been developed with schools and their communities and it has created a real sense of protection of our facilities. They simply do not want them damaged. There is an unwritten rule amongst students that their school is not a place that people should be damaging.

Of course, there are people who are intent on causing harm and this legislation seeks to give powers to exclude those people. As a state government we must be absolutely committed to ensuring a safe working place for our teachers and their staff and a safe environment for our children. Every school in my electorate has been exposed, to some varying degree, to the harm caused by unwanted persons on school premises. The member for Logan talked about the fact that we do bounce back, and I have to say that every time there is an incident in a school in my electorate we bounce back, hopefully as high as we were in the first place.

I am a very regular visitor to the schools in my area and I take the time to listen to the hopes and dreams of the young people in our community. I have four school-age children and I know how important schools and education are to young people's future jobs and financial security. Ensuring that our schools and educational institutions are the best that they can be is one of the most important priorities that I have in the electorate of Aspley. That means listening to what our school communities need and working hard to get the results that they want.

Improving school facilities has been a major achievement and we have received over \$11 million to improve the facilities for what are primarily ageing schools within the Aspley electorate. Our schools are full of talented and dedicated young people and staff, and we must ensure that the facilities meet the excellent work inside. One thing that is really important is that we look after our schools' security, because we have had a huge injection of information communication and technology into our schools with over \$750,000 being spent in the largest single injection of funds into the Aspley electorate schools ever.

I completely support the legislation in its entirety. It is important that our schools are the safe and secure learning environments and workplaces that our community expects and deserves. I commend the bill to the House.