



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 21 August 2003

### **LOTE PROGRAM**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (6.24 p.m.): 'Is the Queensland government, through the LOTE system—the Language Other Than English program—preparing our kids for the invasion?' These are the words of a person on learning that at the primary school his daughter attends it is compulsory for her to learn Indonesian. There is no choice in the language. Many parents express concern at the fact that their children are being forced to learn a language other than English as they feel it is wrong that children who are having difficulty comprehending English have to try to understand another language as well. However, that is not the case with these parents. They are happy to have their child attend LOTE, but they are totally opposed to their daughter being taught to speak Indonesian.

Their concerns, which I am told are not an isolated instance, were taken to the principal, who informed them that LOTE was compulsory and that they had no choice in the language taught. They confirmed this with the Department of Education. This family felt so strongly about their view that the father said he would remove his daughter from the classes and was prepared to travel the 20 minutes each way on the three days a week those classes were held. The department representative informed him that there would be repercussions for them if they did not allow the child to attend. No detail was given as to what those repercussions were.

Now the parents felt that they were being threatened and no consideration for their rights as parents or their strong personal feelings on this issue were even to be taken into consideration. They felt that their rights as parents to guide their child were being negated. They felt that they had lost control to a government department. Rightly or wrongly, these parents felt very strongly that being forced to learn Indonesian was a betrayal of all those who had been killed or maimed in the Bali bombing. These people may have had a brother, friend or other close associate who was a victim of that horrendous attack. Perhaps the emotional scars of the Sari Club bombing being viewed on television night and day, reports on radio and discussions around the family table generated such intense feelings at what was being forced upon them by what appears to be an inflexible program that they found it intolerable. I do not know. However, no consideration was given to this family's feelings. There was no sensitivity in the handling of the situation; just the issuing of what was perceived to be a threat.

The father was informed that the compulsory LOTE program was set up by the minister. This family asked in all seriousness whether the minister had stopped to consider the feelings of people who may object as strongly as they do to their child being forced to speak Indonesian in the current climate and why they cannot be taught another language instead. If that is not possible, why cannot those with strong views be permitted to do homework in the library for the period of the class? These are not unreasonable questions. If this father is prepared to go to such lengths to enforce his rights as a parent and back up his beliefs with action, how many others feel the same way but have agreed to the lessons under duress?

We are forever being told that we must be aware of people's sensitivities, especially cultural sensitivities, so is it not appropriate that the devastation and aftermath of the Bali bombings should also be considered along with this person's viewpoint?

Time expired.