



Speech by

**Mrs D. PRATT**

**MEMBER FOR NANANGO**

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Hansard 15 October 2003

### **BOOROOBIN SUDBURY STATE SCHOOL**

**Mrs PRATT** (Nanango—Ind) (12.14 a.m.): I rise tonight to speak on behalf of the Booroobin Sudbury School, a centre of learning. This school, the parents and students and its experienced registered teachers believe that there are no justifiable reasons for this school to have its accreditation withdrawn. They believe that the school has fulfilled the educational needs of its students and more in that it has prepared its students for life and has done so since the school's inception in 1996. It is not the school which has changed but the Education Department's requirements. It has moved the goal posts, changed the rules and in so doing has jeopardised the future existence of this school.

Some 23 students and staff and six support personnel set out from the Booroobin school to walk to parliament to deliver documentation and a petition to the minister. They also wanted to implore her to re-evaluate the situation surrounding the decision by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board. The consequence of this decision is a loss of funding for the school which could result in the inability of the school to attract overseas students. Without these students there is a distinct possibility that the threat of closure due to non-viability could be realised.

The documentation presented to the minister which I table contains a submission by the school's representative, Mr Derek Sheppard; a letter from staff member and registered teacher, Lois Tarling; and a short history of the long-term graduate students who have attended the Booroobin Sudbury school. There is also a letter from the students who, when I met them, displayed a remarkable ability to conduct themselves and converse on any matter in a way that would be the envy of many adults. These students have approached learning in a way that is very different to that of state schools. I must say that I have never seen students so passionate in their support of a school.

The loyalty and passion the teachers have for this school is very ably displayed in a letter from teacher Gary Mitchell, who holds a teaching Diploma in Secondary Physical Education, a Diploma of Health and a Bachelor of Education Studies along with other qualifications. There are various other letters supporting the Sudbury school from overseas where similar schools operate successfully. Ursula Wagner of the Montessori School in Zell, Germany, writes—

For more than ten years our school has had the possibilities to study the positive effects of self determined learning in children and it's more than 50 years for the Montessori schools in Germany.

This and other letters show that although the Booroobin Sudbury school is a self-determined learning school for children, it is not a new school on the world educational stage.

A letter from Andrew Clements, a development researcher and school owner in Greece, was very strong in its criticism of the move. From New Zealand a letter from Dianna Scullin, the principal of Tamariki school, states—

More and more all over the world it is being recognised that there is a huge need for students to be educated in particular democracies so that they may take part as responsible adults in democratic societies.

Along with other letters from overseas, there is also a copy of a non-conforming petition in support of the school with 152 signatures of people around the world. The last desperate letter is to Mr Beattie to ask him for his support or intervention on behalf of the school. Perhaps this school represents the future of education; I cannot say. But what I do know is that this school wants its students and the students want the school. There has never been any violence, just a real desire to learn.