



Speech by

JOHN ENGLISH

MEMBER FOR REDLANDS

Hansard 12 November 2003

EDUCATION [GENERAL PROVISIONS] AMENDMENT BILL

Mr ENGLISH (Redlands—ALP) (10.34 p.m.): In a perfect world we would not need a bill such as the one we are debating tonight. In a perfect world students, teachers and parents would work cooperatively and in harmony to achieve the best outcomes for the students. Unfortunately, however, this is not a perfect world. There have been a number of high-profile incidents in recent years where we have seen teachers, students and even parents assaulted by intruders on school premises. This bill seeks to give the principal of the school avenues to protect his students, his staff and himself in relation to some parents and their outlandish behaviour. This bill has had wide consultation and has been supported by the principals of state schools. The non-state schools have also been consulted and have endorsed the legislation. Parents and citizens associations and parents and friends associations have also been consulted and acknowledged the benefit of the clauses contained in this bill.

I do have one concern, and I have spoken to the minister about it. I understand that this is going to be fleshed out in the policy and procedures that will underpin this act. I know that in the Police Service if we had to issue a notice there was some flexibility in relation to what we call substituted service, that is, the ability to serve a notice on a person at a later time. I do not want to see principals being put in the situation of being called to a particular teaching block as a result of a parent abusing or assaulting a teacher, having to confront that situation and then saying, 'Sorry, I've got to race back and get my ticket book at the office.' There has to be some mechanism for a verbal direction to be given and subsequently complied with. The notice can then be formally served on the abusive parent or person at a later date. We do not want to get too hung up on the formal handing over of the notice. I raise that concern. There has to be some mechanism to handle that situation.

There are a lot of good things happening in the education system in the electorate of Redlands. I would like to briefly touch on some of them this evening. We have recently seen the opening of the senior campus of the Faith Lutheran College. The principal, Anthony Mueller, is extremely proud of this new campus and so he should be. The community of the Faith Lutheran College have worked very hard to get this senior campus up and running. It really is a credit to Faith Lutheran College.

I would like to pass on to the minister the thanks of the community of the Victoria Point State High School for the announcement in this year's budget of funding for the new performing arts building. The principal, Kevin McKennarley, the staff and particularly the P&C association are over the moon about this new performing arts centre and look forward to seeing its completion early next year.

My daughter is not currently attending school but next year she will start preschool, so I begin to understand the concerns that parents have in sending their loved ones off to this place and being under the care and responsibility of other people. I recently went to an orientation morning run by St Rita's. The principal, Steve Dunne, did a fantastic job of explaining how modern curriculums are structured and how they are different from curriculums that I experienced when going through school. I look forward to my daughter entering the community at St Rita's and enjoying her educational experience there.

At this point I also welcome Jane Bradbury, the new principal of Macleay Island State School. Jane has recently come on board. In my dealings with her so far she has proven to be a very competent teacher and administrator. I look forward to welcoming her to the educational community in the Redlands.

I was also honoured to be invited by Mr Ray Kiely to be a participant in a triennial review process. I compliment the state education system on this process of triennial reviews. It allows the school administration and the broader community, from the members of the P&C to external members of the community, to look at what the school is doing and to assess it. I think that is a valuable process. I was quite honoured to be included in that process by Ray Kiely.

Last week, the Minister, the Hon. Anna Bligh, attended Thornlands State School to open the new hall. I know how many years this project has been in the offing. I compliment the minister for giving the funds to allow this project to come to completion. I also compliment the Deputy Mayor of the Redland Shire Council, Councillor Joe Ross, for the seven years of hard work that he undertook to bring this project to fruition.

A few weeks ago I sought leave from parliament to attend Carmel Catholic College's awards evening. I am embarrassed to say that I locked my keys in the car in the car park. Whilst madly trying to get back to the House to be on time, I was in the embarrassing position of having to call the Whip to say that I could not get back until I got my keys out of the car. I thank Faye Conley, her husband John and about 15 members of the school community who decided to keep me company in the car park for the hour and a half that it took for the RACQ to arrive to let me into my car. Whilst it was a very nice gesture of support, I do not think that I will hear the end of it.

Earlier this evening I also took leave from parliament to attend the annual general meeting of the Chisholm Catholic College P&F Association. It was an important meeting to attend for a range of reasons. One reason I wanted to go tonight was that many members of the committee, who have contributed seven years or more service to the P&F, were finally standing down. It was important to be there to acknowledge their hard work. I pass on the thoughts and best wishes of the community to Bruce Laker, Graham Smith, Mavis Host and Maxine Jorgensen. Graham Smith was elected as president, so he is continuing with his contributions towards Chisholm Catholic College's life, but Bruce Laker, Mavis Host and Maxine Jorgensen were standing down. I know Bruce Laker quite well. He has contributed tireless service to the Chisholm Catholic College community. I thank him for his years of dedicated service and wish him well in the future. I commend the bill to the House.