



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Hansard 12 November 2003

**EDUCATION [GENERAL PROVISIONS] AMENDMENT BILL**

**Dr LESLEY CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (9.19 p.m.): Sadly, our schools and school grounds are no longer the safe places they used to be. I am pleased to rise to support the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2003 that will give school principals and the chief executive of the Department of Education powers to direct any persons to keep out of school grounds—whether they be ex-students, parents or any other individuals—who threaten or assault people working or learning in our schools. The government wants to send a clear message that violent or threatening incursions into schools will not be tolerated and that intruders will be subject to harsh penalties if they enter schools to threaten or assault people working or learning there.

The bill provides that principals may issue directions to people on school premises, including how they should conduct themselves and the areas of a school in which they are permitted. These directions may be up to 30 days and the maximum penalty for a breach of this direction is \$1,500. In more serious cases, usually where people become abusive, threatening or violent, the principal may prohibit the person from entering the school for 24 hours to allow them to cool down. A direction can also be made to people who have no good, lawful reason to be on school premises and who are damaging school property or committing other offences.

If a person's conduct is more serious or continues to occur despite the school's efforts, the chief executive may prohibit a person from the school for a period of up to 60 days. Further, if a person's conduct escalates to such an extent that it causes physical harm, fear of physical harm or damage to property, the chief executive may apply to a magistrate to prohibit the person from the school for between 60 days and 12 months. This power extends to the banning of serious violent offenders and arsonists who pose a threat to schools and their communities. Breaches of these orders will be dealt with as a contempt of court and will be punishable by a maximum penalty of \$15,000 or a maximum of three years imprisonment. The principals of non-state schools and the schools' governing bodies will exercise the powers of state school principals and the chief executive respectively. The exercise of these powers is on the same basis as state schools.

As I indicated at the outset of my speech, it saddens me that this legislation is necessary because such relatively isolated violent incidents that occur in our schools detract from the fact that our schools are doing an excellent job in fostering the talents and abilities of their students whose achievements are quite outstanding. In my electorate, which has 15 schools, there are five non-state and 10 state schools, and I take a close and personal interest in their progress and development. In the last three years there has been some \$5 million spent on capital works and airconditioning in the schools across my electorate, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank and commend all the principals, their staff and parent bodies for their dedication and commitment.

I have often spoken in this place about my pride in the achievements of individual schools and their students, as I and many of us in this House have seen on display at presentation and speech nights that we have been attending recently. Whilst I have focused in this House on the achievements of my schools and students, today I would like to focus on the challenges that the population growth and development is creating for the schools in the western and northern parts of my electorate, particularly in Redlynch and on the Marlin Coast. In recognition of the rapid growth south of Cairns in the electorate of Mulgrave and, more recently, in my electorate, Education Queensland has

commissioned the preparation of a local area facilities plan to guide the future provision of school facilities to cope with this growth. The consultant report is currently with the minister for her consideration. I would like to place on record the future scenario that I believe will best meet the needs of my school communities.

This scenario is based on the outcomes of previous consultation with the Redlynch school community in 2001 and my more recent personal discussions with principals and P&C associations in a number of schools, but I do recognise there needs to be further consultation and consideration by the government before we can adopt a local area facilities plan that will set the future direction for schools in these growth areas of Barron River. School enrolments have grown in recent years with both Freshwater and Redlynch schools, and each year additional facilities have been provided, including additional classrooms, toilets and undercover areas.

Enrolments at Redlynch State School are now just over 800 students, and the greatest priority there is for new administration and resource centres which were built to accommodate a school of only some 350 students. However, the next step for Redlynch, which is supported by the school community, should in my view be the development of a middle school on the Education Department land adjacent to the existing school. Freshwater State School relocated and upgraded its library when B block was rebuilt some two years ago after a devastating fire, and a purpose-built administration centre was provided in 1998 which functions very well. The issue for Freshwater is the school tuckshop, which is in dire need of upgrading, and I thank the minister for recognising the problem and providing a subsidy of \$57,000 under the school capital assistance scheme and for her willingness to provide a further \$7,000 following my representations just this week after cost estimates for the new tuckshop were revised upwards.

Further growth on the Marlin Coast will require another primary school, but the land at Kewarra Beach that was purchased back in 1989 at the time of the last development boom is really not very well located. While the Redlynch Valley development will continue, it will not be sufficient to support a P-12 school for at least 15 years according to the Education Queensland demographic unit. I understand that an innovative and exciting response to this situation has been proposed in the local area facilities plan and this response has many advantages. As I indicated previously, more consultation will be required to determine if there is sufficient community support for it to be progressed.

Under this proposal, Smithfield State High School would become a P-9 campus and a senior college comprising years 10, 11 and 12 would be developed on James Cook University campus, which is located adjacent to the school but on the other side of the Captain Cook Highway. Redlynch students from the proposed middle school would complete their secondary schooling at this senior college together with students from the proposed Smithfield middle school. I hope the minister will endorse a program of further consultation to seek the views of all relevant schools and James Cook University because there are many issues that will need to be thoroughly investigated and discussed before this proposal can be adopted as a blueprint for the further delivery of education on the Marlin Coast.

As I have indicated, I consider this an exciting and innovative proposal consistent with our education and training reforms which aim to provide multiple pathways for our students. The participation rate of Queensland year 12 students in higher education is currently 40 per cent, yet only 33 per cent of students in far-north Queensland opt for university study, suggesting that many students are capable of tertiary study but are not yet taking advantage of this form of education. So I would hope a senior college located on the JCU campus would strengthen the growing relationship between Smithfield High School and JCU, and encourage more students to enrol in tertiary study while also meeting the needs of students choosing other pathways. I have just learnt today that there have been discussions with James Cook University, and it looks as though there will be some 20 students in year 12 from across the region who will be incorporating tertiary studies as part of their year 12 program, which I think is a very exciting development.

In any event, the government will need to respond to the population growth in my electorate and, in particular, address the critical need for additional facilities at Redlynch State School. My school communities know that they have my support, and I will continue to make representations on their behalf until we have a local area facilities plan which is adopted and implemented in a timely fashion to provide the educational facilities that are much needed for students in my electorate of Barron River.