



Speech by

Lawrence Springborg

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

Hansard Wednesday, 1 September 2004

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, VICTORIA POINT STATE SCHOOL

Mr SPRINGBORG (Southern Downs—NPA) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.25 a.m.): The government, and in particular the Minister for Education, has failed school communities across Queensland. The minister has failed because she and her department have been unwilling to stand up and back the school community of the Victoria Point State School in Queensland. She has not been prepared to stand behind the principal, she has not been prepared to stand behind the teachers, she has not been prepared to stand behind the parents who find the whole notion of drug abuse in our schools to be completely repugnant.

The principal of that school made a decision to expel two students who had been found using marijuana or who had marijuana in their possession. The parents across Queensland and the teachers across Queensland find it absolutely intolerable that this sort of action has been allowed to happen by the minister.

Under this government, and the minister in particular, we have a situation where she has been unprepared to stand behind those school principals. We know that school principals and teachers already find it difficult to maintain discipline, to set examples, to reflect and reinforce the community values in our schools. Can members imagine the signal that this now sends to people who may have a predisposition to want to use drugs in our schools or take drugs into our schools? Basically, this decision means that if a student is caught with an illegal drug in his or her possession and a principal expels that student, then the department is going to overturn that decision of the principal.

It is not good enough for this government not to stand behind our schools and not to stand behind the principals. We need to have a zero tolerance towards drugs in our schools. We need to stand behind principals who are trying to do the right thing in enforcing those very, very strong values in our schools.

We now have the worst of both worlds. We have no support for school principals from this minister and we also have no diversion, no counselling and no other services for these students.