



Speech by
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DRUGS IN SCHOOLS

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (6.14 p.m.): Tonight's debate is so important because it is about protecting the rights of children, the rights of parents and sticking up for school communities that make a decision about behaviour management in their schools. At the Victoria Point school there is a behaviour management policy that has been approved and agreed by the school community. The principal acted on the principles and the words of that behaviour management policy.

Because these two students were found with drugs on the school grounds there is a policy of exclusion. That is what the principal did. That is backed up by the school community. Here we have these weak-kneed, jelly-legged Labor Party people tonight trying to bring in soft rules to undermine the principals, to undermine the families and to send out the message to kids at schools, 'It's all right. It does not matter if there is a behaviour management system. Go and bring drugs to school. Flout the rules and we will let you back in.'

That is the worst possible attitude to have. The members opposite care more about the two kids who broke the rules of the school than the rest of the kids and the families who have sent their kids there to have an umbrella of school rules to protect their children. The minister read out a letter from a parent of one of the children. I will read a letter from a parent of a student at the school. This letter was written to the Premier. It stated—

I have never in the past been prompted to write or complain to any Minister or head of State, however the decision of the Department of Education to over rule the decision of the Principal of Victoria Point High School has angered me enough to write.

I have a ... son attending this school. It is hard enough as a parent, to raise responsible children in today's society as you would be well aware—being a parent yourself. In raising responsible children, we as parents give them rules and consequences. We also know that if we do not follow through when a child breaks a rule, then we open ourselves to our children pushing the boundaries every time, even not taking us seriously as parents or following society's rules.

When your child starts at this school, each parent and child attends an interview with either the Principal or the Deputy. Each Parent and child is told that this school has a zero tolerance for drugs in the school and that the consequences of bringing drugs into the school will result in expulsion. At that point if a parent does not agree with that policy, they are free to choose another school with a different policy.

I dread to think what the impact of the Education Department's decision will be on the minds of many of the children—oh they said it, but they did not really mean it, so we can do it at least once and get away with it. Isn't it time as a Community that we say no and mean no to our children—that drugs are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

The last paragraph states—

I am not saying that we should sling these 2 children into jail. What I am saying is that as a community, we say to them and their parents—you were told the rules and you broke them. You were aware of the consequences now take responsibility.

That is what this debate is about. It is a dreadful task for principals to have to make the decision to exclude children from school. I have known many principals who have had to do that and it has broken their hearts. But they have had to think about the other kids at the school. They have had to think about standards and principles.

What is the point in educating children and saying, 'This is what we accept in our school and these are the consequences,' if we allow those principles and those rules to be trampled over. The Teachers Union is threatening to strike at this school tomorrow and at another school in central Queensland over another matter related to the lack of behaviour management resources.

The teachers know and understand that their authority is being undermined. The teachers know and understand that the families and parents have spent so much time and energy in determining, in consultation, the behaviour management plan for the school as happens in our state schools. The idea is a partnership where the community helps set the standards for what it expects. For the Education Department, with the backing of this government and Labor members, to trample over the wishes of the parents and families of this school and trample over the behaviour management rules is an absolute disgrace.

When are those opposite going to get the gumption to stand up for all of the good kids of this school and of this state? When will they understand that one rotten apple can ruin a whole barrel? Yes, we have sympathy for the kids. However, if kids do not know what the rules are and do not have an expectation that they are to be upheld, then we might as well give the whole game away when it comes to the fight against drugs. It is about time the Labor members of this parliament had the guts to stand up for the principal and the kids.