



Speech by

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (12.03 pm): I was very interested to read this morning's paper. As I sat there over a glass of orange juice and a bowl of cereal I was surprised while reading the QConfidential section of the *Courier-Mail* for in that section today there is a little piece entitled 'Map for Captain Bligh'. The piece tells us that the luminaries at the department of education have set up a working group called MAP or Make Anna Premier. The article goes on to say—

MAP issues are feel-good initiatives identified by EQ bureaucrats to help elevate Bligh to the top job.

I think this is a fantastic idea. In fact, I am prepared to sign up to the MAP program just so that I can get down to the nitty-gritty, roll up my sleeves and tell the people on this working group why the task of making Anna Premier is going to be so difficult. First and foremost, MAP is going to have to be very tricky in overcoming the minister's neglect for her current portfolio of education.

Neglect is a very good word to use. One need only look at the way the very important issue of cleaning asbestos out of schools has been dealt with. We had the incidents at Moggill State School that were brought to the public's attention by my colleague the member for Moggill. At the time the accusations were dismissed as scaremongering and it was claimed that Dr Flegg was simply trying to look good for his own constituency. This problem affects 1,171 out of 1,300 schools in Queensland. This is not an isolated problem. The fact that a Liberal member uncovered it at a school in his electorate should not surprise anyone considering 90 per cent of the schools in the state are facing similar problems.

Let us look at correspondence brought to our attention by a parent whose child attends the Wynnum North State School in the electorate of Lytton. Children at that school received a letter for their parents stating—

Towards the end of last year there was a minor incident involving the release of a very small amount of dust during drilling work.

Here we have a letter that is not on official letterhead, does not have a signature and was given to children and not directly to parents; a letter that looks no more official than a notice of school sports times and it is saying to parents that children at the school their children attend have been present in areas where dust from an asbestos roof was released. This along with incidents at Moggill Primary School, where children had dust actually fall on them, shows the scant regard for children's safety that has been plainly evident in the handling of this matter. For Anna 'would-be Premier' Bligh's part, she had this to say as to why she had not lobbied for more money for this issue in the budget: 'The government has to prioritise government spending.'

I suppose this is the reason there are no compulsory safety switches in most of Queensland's classrooms while children have been reported to have been injured after putting thumb tacks through wires. The Department of Industrial Relations has a page on its web site explaining the need for safety switches in the workplace, yet the education department does not think children are worth protecting against that risk. There are ads on TV telling us to put safety switches in our homes for our kids, but principals are told by the education department that they can take a decision to prioritise minor works funding for matters such as this. Maybe this is the reason there is no soap in some schools or schools in

hot places do not have airconditioning. It may be easy to say we cannot provide all of these things. Some of them would be nice, though, for the sake of our children.

I also wonder whether the same people on the MAP committee in the education department are those described as political operatives threatening school principals with ruined careers should they cooperate with federal government schemes. I must congratulate the federal education minister for putting on the record concerns that have come to him after three principals approached a Queensland federal MP with bullying claims. This is not one isolated case that may be brushed off as a misunderstanding. Three principals were so concerned that the powers that be in Education House were trying to strip their schools of funding that they felt the need to go to their local federal member. Bullying of school principals in any form cannot be tolerated. Here we have principals trying to do what is best for their schools, trying to secure the most resources for their students and they are having their careers threatened because they are seeking that money through federal government schemes.

The minister should not sweep this issue under the carpet like she does so many others. She should take these issues seriously and reprimand the people involved. Trying to duck the issue and change the topic like she did in question time this morning is reprehensible. This is the ideology of an arrogant and out of touch government and the political pawns they strategically position in their government departments.

I commend Dr Nelson for vowing to slash through this entrenched bureaucratic red tape and to continue to provide millions of dollars in grants to P&Cs. I also urge Queensland principals to encourage their P&Cs to apply for grants under the federal scheme regardless of the threats. It is important that schools accept as much federal money as they can to make up for the shockingly low level of resources schools receive from the state government. In fact, Minister Bligh said this morning that federal money supplements state money. This is a cute way of saying that federal money plugs the gaping holes that are left by state government inaction. For the minister to stand up here this morning and skirt around the issue by linking it to federal Liberal Party leadership shows just how badly she is missing the very real signs of arrogance that are arising inside the government of which she is a part.

I am happy to join the Make Anna Premier working group. It will be tough to hide the things that I have just outlined. If I can continue to make a positive contribution that will lift her performance—

Time expired.