



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Tuesday, 8 August 2006

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) BILL

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (7.42 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on the Education (General Provisions) Bill 2006. I note that the Minister for Police is ready to proceed with the debate on the next bill, so I will be brief. I will try to keep my comments as short as possible.

Recently, some of the state schools in my electorate have raised with me the issue of behaviour management. On reading the bill I was pleased to note that the minister has tried to strengthen the ability of principals and schools to take some decisive action to respond to a problem that is currently present in some of my schools. Recently, a school P&C wrote to the minister about some real concerns it has about behaviour problems in one of the schools in my electorate.

The reality is that while some behaviour problems may involve only one, two or three students, they can effectively destroy the ability of a whole class of students to concentrate, to learn and to achieve the principle objectives the bill. In the explanatory notes the minister states—

The primary objective of the Bill is to put in place a legislative regime that facilitates the making available to each Queensland child or young person a high-quality education that will help to maximise his or her education potential.

In ensuring that we have that ability through our legislation, we need to ensure that one or two problem students do not destroy it for the rest of the students who are trying as hard as they can to maximise their education potential.

On reading the summary of some of the provisions in the bill that will affect state schools, it was very pleasing that the minister talked about ensuring that the behaviour management plan to be adopted by a school must be subject to broad parent and student consultation, and must accord with the department's code of school behaviour. It was also good that the minister talked about enabling principals, in consultation with the school community, to set a dress code policy, including appropriate sanctions.

The minister also talked about strengthening the ability of principals to address student disciplinary issues through new measures, including the ability to attach reasonable conditions to continuing enrolment. He also referred to enabling principals to formally refuse enrolments on safety grounds. When I read the provision about enabling principals to formally refuse enrolments on safety grounds, I reflected on a recent P&C meeting that I attended where the principal said that she was not able to refuse the enrolment of some students.

I look forward to seeing this bill become a new law in Queensland. I hope that in 12 months time there will be a review to see if the high ideals of the bill are achieved in real life in our communities. I have certainly encouraged my school communities to get involved with the finalisation of the various school behaviour management plans. I have certainly recommended it as strongly as I can.

I do not intend to touch on some of the other issues that have been debated during the discussion on the bill. I will be supporting the bill. I commend the minister on his initiatives to strengthen the ability of schools to take more decisive action on issues involving the behaviour management of students and, more importantly, to make sure that parents are aware of their responsibilities for their children. No longer can parents simply say that it is up to the school to solve the problems of their children. At the end of the day, the parents have a very clear responsibility.

I think that this bill is all about reinforcing the rights of all students to have the opportunity to maximise their highest educational potential. It is also about the responsibility of parents and the responsibility of students. More importantly, it is about trying to get the best outcomes for everyone in our schools. I commend the bill to the House.