



Speech by

## Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Thursday, 2 March 2006

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### PREP YEAR

**Mr MESSENGER** (Burnett—NPA) (11.56 am): I am happy to rise to speak to this motion concerning the prep year—a very valuable addition to our school curricula. Queensland wants a prep year. Teachers want a prep year. Parents want a prep year. The P&Cs and the school councils want a prep year. The coalition wants a prep year, but we are scared of one thing: we are scared of Labor's prep year. We have seen mismanagement across health, environment, police, transport and the housing department, and it would be less than honest of me not to note in this speech that this motion is simply a waste of time for this parliament. It is a motherhood statement designed to take the focus away from the government's political problems of today.

This government desperately wants us to forget about Queenslanders dying on waiting lists. This government desperately wants us to forget about the doctors, nurses and health professionals who are still being bullied and being told what to do by an out-of-control and bloated health bureaucracy. This government desperately wants us to forget about it. Government backbenchers are more interested in overseas trips and looking after their mates than their constituents.

**Mr O'BRIEN:** I rise to a point of order. I think it is standing order 236 in regard to relevance.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): I was about to tell the member for Burnett that we are discussing a motion which is about the introduction of the prep year. I think you are allowed to make the point that it may be a diversion, but I do not think you can speak about it much further than that. So I ask you to return to the motion.

**Mr MESSENGER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your direction. This government desperately wants us to forget that the previous education minister, and probably the next leader of the Labor Party, failed to protect our children—our prep children, in fact—from the dangers of asbestos. We had primary schoolchildren unprotected, being used to remove broken building products which had been contaminated by asbestos.

Speaking to the motion and the prep year, I believe we have to consider the behavioural management policies that will be implemented during the prep year process. This government desperately wants us to forget that because of woeful, inadequate behavioural management policies—de facto policy—a significant number of primary and secondary school students are made by this government to take dangerous drugs like Ritalin and dexamphetamines; drugs which the American therapeutic drug administration is now warning us about. It is warning us about the dangers of enlarged body organs—hearts, livers and kidneys—in our prep year children.

**Mr LEE:** I rise to a point of order. Surely there are some issues of relevance here.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Mr Fouras): I have made the point. He keeps on talking about its relevance to the prep year. The member has two minutes left. I suggest that you get back to the motion, but you are talking about these impacts on prep year students, so I have to let it go.

**Mr MESSENGER:** Mr Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for your direction. I can understand why members on the opposite side of the House do not want to hear the truth.

This Labor government has consistently underfunded education, and it is the underfunding of the prep year that we have to worry about. We have seen similar underfunding in many other different areas, health being one that springs to mind. Teachers are being given the same impossible budgetary targets, and the same can be said of our schools. I refer members to an advertisement in the *Courier-Mail* which was published on Saturday, 26 February 2005. It was paid for by the Queensland Teachers Union, which made the claim that Queensland's total real recurrent government expenditure per student was the second lowest in Australia and that our state school students received nearly \$600 less in funding than the Australian average. Was the Queensland Teachers Union lying when it said that this funding shortfall equates to about \$280 million underfunding each year for government schools?

The Beattie Labor government reduced the Education budget in real terms from 26 per cent of the budget in 2003—

Time expired.