



Speech by

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MOTION: HEALTH OF QUEENSLAND SCHOOLCHILDREN

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.40 pm): It gives me great pleasure to rise to second the motion moved by my colleague the honourable member for Cunningham and shadow minister for education. The theme of this motion is that prevention is better than cure. The Queensland public hospitals performance report shows that, although this year in Queensland we are spending \$6.65 billion in the health sector, clearly, some of the things that we are doing are just not working. This morning the acting health minister acknowledged that, although elective surgery procedures have decreased over the past five years, that was because of the number of emergency procedures increasing. But we see in the report that, in terms of triage, only 67 per cent of people involved in category 2 emergency procedures are assisted within 10 minutes when 80 per cent should be the target. When we talked about the fact that the number of beds has decreased from 10,000 12 years ago to 9,600 now, the acting health minister said that the number of critical care beds has increased by 60 over that same period. So over the past five years, five per cent of the 10,000 beds that we have lost have been replaced by 60 critical care beds. Clearly, we need to look at different ways of doing things. As I said, prevention is better than cure. Yet only a fraction of the \$6.65 billion Health budget is spent on prevention. All the other state governments spend only a fraction of their health budgets on prevention.

The first part of the motion refers to mandatory physical activity. The shadow education minister mentioned that the Healthy Kids, Clever Kids initiative requires schoolchildren from prep to year 3 to undergo 20 to 30 minutes of physical activity per day—and the member spoke in detail about that—and 150 minutes of physical activity per week for students in years 4 to 10. That initiative would become integrated into the school's curriculum. The member referred to the statistics of childhood obesity becoming an endemic problem and the number of children who are not exercising at all. This policy would give children the best chance of fighting obesity. Like most of us who try to exercise a lot, after a while we want to exercise instead of having to do it. That is why I think this initiative is very important for our kids.

The second part of the motion refers to the immunisation register. I note that the government, in section six of its amendment, refers to introducing the school based vaccination program. I note that the amendment states 'with parental consent'. We have decreasing rates of immunisation. It is important that kids be immunised. If they are not being immunised, it is important for schools to be aware of a child's immunisation status so that other kids are not exposed to these dangerous diseases. In New South Wales that system works very well. I commend the government for its vaccination program, but I think it has a different thrust from what is contained in our motion.

The third part of the motion states that drug and alcohol education must be provided to all Queensland schoolchildren. Currently, there is a bill before the House which I introduced that relates to restricting the supply of alcohol to minors. I will not refer to that. I note that last year at a forum held after schoolies week the minister pointed out that education was the best preventive measure that we could take. We agree that it is a great preventive measure, but we think that the drug and alcohol education that is currently taught in high schools is inadequate. So we seek to ensure that drug and alcohol education is ramped up in Queensland schools, particularly in the junior years, because when the kids get to the senior years, when they are more exposed to alcohol and drugs, they will remember the things that they were

taught. That will help them to be more resistant to the temptations that they face. I call on the Labor government to facilitate enhanced drug and alcohol education by providing the necessary material and resources to ensure that this important life education becomes a critical part of the school curriculum.

In the time available to me, I want to note many of the initiatives contained in the motion. I share the concern of the shadow education minister about the review of sport and physical activity not having gone anywhere for over a year. It is indicative of this government: it conducts lots of reviews, but we would like to see some action. Certainly, the amendment contains some very nice words, but it is important that we be seen to be doing things for our kids. I commend the motion before the House.