



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Wednesday, 8 August 2007

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (7.39 pm): In speaking to the report of Estimates Committee E I will address briefly some issues of law enforcement and policing in Queensland schools. Schoolchildren of the 21st century are facing many challenges, temptations and dangers that are unprecedented. I am most concerned about the dangers that illicit drugs pose to the health and wellbeing of schoolchildren and their families. The reason that I use the word 'unprecedented' in describing the dangers of illicit drugs is that we have never had illicit drugs on our streets or in our schoolyards which give our children or teenagers many second chances.

The purity of the illicit drugs or, conversely, the impurities mixed with the illicit drugs—the methamphetamines, the ices—means that it is possible for a teenager or a schoolchild to experiment with those drugs and experience three instant deadly outcomes: addiction, psychosis or death. In the 21st century it is true that one pill can kill. It could also have happened in the 20th century but the chance is increasing as time passes. The Labor Party's policy of harm minimisation as opposed to the coalition's zero tolerance policy has ensured that there is a significant number of illicit drugs in our schools and also the wider community. I make this claim based on conversations that I have had with parents, schoolchildren, teachers and education officials, police officers and the latest statistics released by the Australian Crime Commission which show, in summary, that 41.32 per cent of clandestine drug labs in Australia are discovered in Queensland.

Mr MOORHEAD: I rise to a point of order. I have examined the report of Estimates Committee E and I cannot find anything in there in relation to illicit drugs or methamphetamine labs. I believe that the honourable member is speaking on matters other than those relevant to the report before the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): It perhaps may assist the proceedings of the House if you could refer to the budget statement or to the report that we are currently considering to help the honourable member and perhaps other honourable members.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you. I suppose the honourable member does not really realise or acknowledge the fact that there are illicit drugs in our schools. Perhaps he thinks that there are not any illicit drugs in our schools and it is not a serious issue and that children's lives are not at risk. The fact is that the biggest illicit drug problem in Australia is in Queensland and that has flowed into our schools. I think that is entirely relevant to the education estimates debate. Today I challenge this government to prove me wrong. I challenge the government to give permission and resources for an independent study into the use of illicit and non-illicit drugs in our classrooms and schoolyards. I will give dealers and students who take and use illicit drugs in our schools fair warning: enjoy the good times under Labor, escaping detection and punishment while a weak-on-drugs Labor government is in charge, because as soon as the coalition government—

Mr HOOLIHAN: I rise to a point of order. A ruling was just made in relation to illicit drugs. I sat on Estimates Committee E and there was no mention of illicit drugs in any way, shape or form at that hearing in relation to education.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Member for Burnett, perhaps if there was a particular part of the budget that you are referring to, a line in the MPS or something in the report that may assist other honourable members.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you for your direction. I understand that members opposite would not like to acknowledge the fact that there is a drug problem in our schools and they would prefer not to hear it.

Mr HOOLIHAN: Mr Deputy Speaker—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Order! Resume your seat, member for Keppel. I have asked you, member for Burnett, if you could perhaps, to assist the proceedings of the House, refer to a line in the MPS, in the education budget or in the report that has been provided to the House in relation to the deliberations of Estimates Committee E that would perhaps bring the matter of relevance to the attention of other members.

Mr MESSENGER: Thank you for your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I should talk about school closures, because I am sure that school closures is relevant to Estimates Committee E.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr O'Brien): Unfortunately, the time for the member has expired.