



Speech by

Hon. Rod Welford

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard Thursday, 23 August 2007

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Milpera State High School

Hon. RJ WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Education and Training and Minister for the Arts) (10.04 am): In April this year I announced a thorough investigation would be undertaken into reported health concerns at Milpera State High School at Chelmer. Staff were concerned about the incidence of cancer amongst current and former staff and they asked my department to investigate whether there might be any environmental causes.

Two groups were established to review the matter, a technical working group and a stakeholder reference group. The technical working group consists of technical experts from Queensland Health, Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, the Environmental Protection Agency, Brisbane City Council and my department. The stakeholder reference group is made up of school staff and other relevant stakeholders, as well as key members of the technical working group to ensure an open information and communication flow occurs.

A comprehensive investigation of the work environment is being undertaken, including looking at the site's history, environmental sampling, and epidemiological and statistical analysis. I am pleased to inform the House this morning that the first stage of our investigation has been completed. Independent environmental consultants have done an environmental site assessment and found no evidence of contamination. Soil, water and air samples were taken from the site and all samples were well within acceptable levels.

I hope that this initial testing will help alleviate some of the concerns of staff and community members. The health and wellbeing of staff and students is—and will remain—my highest priority. Every effort is being made to keep staff, students and parents informed. An information session outlining the results of these initial tests has been well received by staff and copies of the report will be made available to them.

In addition to the environmental site assessment, however, further workplace monitoring has begun at the sites to assess and, where possible, eliminate the existence of any other occupational risks. It is expected that this testing will take approximately three months to complete.

I want to reassure staff and students that Milpera State High School is safe for all services to continue for the time being while further investigations are undertaken. I will of course keep the House informed of any future developments from the investigation.