



Speech by


Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 5 April 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Weapons in Schools

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (9.57 am): The Bligh government is committed to providing Queensland school students with a first-class education. This includes ensuring that schools are places of learning where students feel safe, comfortable and cared for. In the wake of an incident at Southport State High School last week, I want to reassure Queenslanders that our schools are safe.

Almost three-quarters of a million students attend state and non-state schools in Queensland every single day, and incidents involving weapons are very rare. And when incidents do occur, the department responds swiftly. For instance, in 2009-10, 108 students were expelled from state schools for physical misconduct involving an object. Queensland also has one of the most open and transparent reporting systems for student misconduct of any state or non-state school system in Australia. Details of exclusions and short and long suspensions are listed in the Department of Education and Training's annual report each year as well as being posted on the department's website.

Other initiatives and legislative changes implemented by the Bligh government to further protect students include establishing the Queensland Schools Alliance Against Violence to deal with violence and bullying in all schooling sectors; extending powers for principals to exclude students for unacceptable behaviour without needing departmental approval; and announcing a series of 'Raising the Bar' forums to give principals, teachers and P&Cs the opportunity to suggest ways to improve standards in schools.

I want to send a very clear message to students and parents that knives have no place in schools, and that we have a zero tolerance approach to violence in schools. As a parent of two young boys in primary school, I was very disturbed to hear about the serious incident last week. As education minister, I took immediate action. I instructed Education Queensland to conduct an urgent review into all policies and legislation relating to the possession of weapons in schools. The review covers exclusion powers, searching student property, responsible behaviour plans and the communication of policies to students and teachers.

While last week's incident was an isolated one, the government has a responsibility to minimise the chances of it recurring. There is no reason for a student to take a knife to school. The Bligh government makes no apologies for taking a hardline stance against knife possession in schools and we will not shy away from tough decisions to further protect Queensland students.