




Speech by

Michael Crandon

MEMBER FOR COOMERA

Hansard Thursday, 8 September 2011

ORMEAU STATE SCHOOL; LIFE EDUCATION

 **Mr CRANDON** (Coomera—LNP) (5.12 pm): It was such a pleasure to open the *Gold Coast Bulletin* to page 3 on Monday of this week and find a half-page colour photo of students from Ormeau State School and a headline 'Ormeau Takes Top Honour'. Principal Heather Andrew told me that Life Education Australia awarded Ormeau State School the inaugural School of the Year award at a gala dinner on 12 August in Sydney. This award was won by Ormeau State School from a field of 3,000 from around Australia, so it certainly was a big win. Harold the Giraffe is the logo for Life Education and, consequently, the award is a gold Harold look-alike. Heather praised the P&C Association that has supported Ormeau State School for 10 years with funding so that every student attends every year, thereby delivering the total development program. Ormeau has 860 students currently, and the funding commitment from the P&C runs to thousands of dollars each year.

The program has been coordinated at Ormeau by Deputy Principal Peter Wright, and the educator from Life Education is Janet Connolly. Heather told me that Janet continues to deliver a superb program from prep to year 7 each year, with a highly interactive presentation that is age appropriate for students. The key message is clearly about Harold—healthy development and healthy living. Antidrug and antialcohol messages are regularly used to highlight the development delays and development consequences that can arise when these substances are abused. Younger students learn all about body parts and their functions.

It really is pleasing for any parent or grandparent to know that their children's school P&C Association is so committed to such a worthwhile program. I congratulate Ormeau State School P&C and President Helen Falcone, who has given the program a big thumbs up for its benefit to the students within the school. I spoke with Michael Fawsitt, CEO of Life Education Queensland, who told me that funding was cut by this government 11 years ago. Life Education Queensland is a not-for-profit organisation. The cut to funding forced them to drop their program to so many schools, particularly in regional areas. In fact, they were forced to close some offices, such as their office in Mackay. It really is a tragedy that such a worthwhile program that teaches our children life skills was not seen to be important by this government. It really is typical, though, because they show in so many ways that they just don't get it.

In closing, I would like to share some comments from the educator, Janet Connolly from Life Education Queensland. Janet is a veteran of the program and came into the role after her daughter went through the program some eight years ago. Janet said she asked students today how they felt about the program and why they thought it was important. She said one boy, in a class that had a number of challenging students, really said it all when he said, 'It's important to keep us safe.' Janet said that it is so important because our children need to know about themselves. She also said that, particularly in the higher primary school grades, the peer pressure is massive. In commenting on the commitment from the Ormeau P&C Association, she said—

The most important thing about Ormeau is that often those that most need the program don't come because of cost. At Ormeau it's paid for, for everyone.