




Speech by

Tim Mulherin

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Hansard Tuesday, 13 November 2012

MOTION: EDUCATION, FUNDING

 **Mr MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (5.54 pm): The Premier and the education minister have broken a promise to the independent school sector over assurances that they would not slash funding to independent schools. At a function at Parliament House on 22 August this year the education minister assured the independent school sector there would be no cuts in funding to independent schools in this year's budget. The next day, 23 August, I noted in a question to the Premier that the government would be meeting with the Catholic sector, no doubt to give the same assurance as it gave to the independent school sector the previous night, and asked would the Premier give the same assurance to students and parents of state schools that their funding would not be cut at that stage in the forthcoming budget. We on this side of parliament treat all school sectors—independent, Catholic and state—equally. The Premier in his usual irrational manner responded to my question with a bizarre comment that we on this side hate independent and Catholic schools. After recovering from his daily brain snap the Premier went on to give no indication that his government would cut funding to the independent, Catholic or state school sectors in his budget. Yet now it has come to our attention that the government has cut funding to the Mackay Christian College by 10.9 per cent to its primary school and 12.2 per cent to its secondary school. This is just one school in Queensland that we know has had its funding cut and we are sure there are many more schools out there suffering the same fate.

This is yet another example of this government misleading parliament. We know a number of ministers and members have already been referred to the Ethics Committee on a number of different matters for misleading parliament. Now we see the Premier and the education minister having disgracefully misled the independent and the Catholic sector by slashing funds which will have dramatic ramifications for the Mackay Christian College. These cuts amount to nearly \$230,000 for the Mackay Christian College which will force the school to retrench a number of part-time teacher aides and two full-time teachers if this matter is not reversed. Mackay Christian College has a number of students with special needs who require the highest support. These students will be the first to be impacted by these cuts. The Premier and education minister need to reverse their decision to cut funds to the Mackay Christian College and honour the commitment given to the independent school sector on 23 August. This is just one school that is calling on the government to reverse its decision on cutting funding. It is simply asking the LNP government to honour its commitment and assurances given to the independent school sector. How many other independent, Catholic and state schools in Queensland have been misled by this callous government and had their funding slashed despite assurances?

This is nothing new for this government that does not seem to hold any weight on promises, commitments or assurances it makes to any sector, group or community in Queensland. Election commitments mean nothing. I have never seen a government that has had so much disregard for the promises it made to the people who elected it. Each week that this LNP melodrama unfolds we see another broken promise, broken election commitment or abandoned pledge. What a sham all the Premier's talk before the election about openness and accountability in government has become. This is a three-ring circus with one minister after another being forced to fire ministerial staff, stand aside senior departmental figures and correct the record just to save ministerial skins. This is a government that has

sacked 14,000 full-time equivalent public servants, which equates to many more, despite the pledge that public servants had nothing to fear from an LNP government. This is a government that slashed hundreds of front-line services despite an election commitment to the contrary. This callous government is kicking public tenants and nursing home residents out onto the street. It has slashed employment and training programs such as Skilling Queenslanders for Work and now is threatening to close some of the TAFE campuses. On top of that we are seeing, as I said, the slashing of funding to independent, Catholic and state schools.

(Time expired)