




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Record of Proceedings, 3 December 2015

MOTION

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (6.00 pm): I move—

That this House:

1. notes with concern that in relation to the Department of Education and Training, more than 600 records were illegally accessed as part of a security breach on the TAFE and education department website; and
2. refers this security breach to the state parliament's Utilities, Science and Innovation Committee for immediate investigation, and report back to the House by 18 February 2016.

This year the Department of Education has had two major IT blunders; blunders that have shaken the confidence of principals, teachers, parents, students and the general public. In late July we were advised of a significant IT bungle where the child protection reporting and the OneSchool system failed miserably. There were 644 reports by school principals concerned about the welfare of children in their schools that did not make it to the Queensland Police Service. Despite claiming that she was not going to be political, the Minister for Education sheeted the blame for this failure to everyone else but herself, failing to recognise that the vast majority of these failed reports occurred under her watch. This is also despite the independent Deloitte report identifying six events between 16 February and 29 May 2015 where reports were made by staff that student protection reports failed to reach Queensland police. The Minister for Education has still not explained why these incidents did not lead to earlier detection of the error; earlier detection that would have prevented a lot of pain for children and their families.

If this bungle was not serious enough, on 10 November we were notified of an even greater breach. We were advised, not by the minister but by the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer, that IT hackers had infiltrated the Education department's IT system and accessed personal information of TAFE students. When questioned about this the Minister for Training and Skills assured everybody in the House that the information that was accessed was information of a low level that anybody could find in the White Pages, for example. How wrong the minister was. Two days later further information came to light in the public domain, again not by the Minister for Education but by a concerned parent. I spoke to a mother who had been contacted by a senior Education official who advised her that the incredibly sensitive complaint that she made through the education department's website had been accessed by international computer hackers. To say that she was distraught would be an understatement. She was obviously concerned about her daughter, but she was equally concerned about the details of the person who was the subject of her complaint. She felt violated and genuinely fearful. This is an incredibly serious issue.

Under pressure from opposition questioning, the Minister for Education eventually made a statement that confirmed that the information accessed was far more serious than what could be found in the White Pages. I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Education for a briefing from her department and QPS officials on this breach and the sensitivities attached to it. Because of that I do not intend to go into the details of the information that was accessed. However, in the interests of transparency and to restore the public's confidence in the department's IT systems, it is my contention that this criminal act needs to come under the scrutiny of a parliamentary committee.

During the departmental briefing I received the distinct impression that we may never hear the minister make any further public announcement on this extremely serious issue. I believe this would be a completely inappropriate outcome. I want to remind the minister that we live in a thriving democracy where transparency and accountability is paramount. The minister has an obligation to the Queensland public to fully disclose the breadth and content of this breach. There are numerous questions to be answered. Has the privacy of innocent people, who disclosed sensitive information through the IT website, been comprised? Have individuals' identities been stolen? How did the government not recognise that its system had been hacked? Can parents have confidence in making complaints through the EQ website in the future? With the minister not addressing these issues in the parliament the only option is for a full and frank inquiry by the relevant committee. We must ensure that no similar breach occurs again.