




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 17 August 2016

ADJOURNMENT

Protecting Childhood, Education

 **Mrs SMITH** (Mount Ommaney—LNP) (11.50 pm): Age-appropriate education makes for happy, healthy teachers, children and parents. That was the message given to me by a group called Protecting Childhood when it met with me in my electorate office in April 2016. My role as the local MP for Mount Ommaney is to raise concerns of individuals and local groups and advocate on their behalf, and one such way is by sponsoring petitions.

Protecting Childhood told me that teachers in Queensland are being forced to teach an age-inappropriate and crowded curriculum which is pushing students too hard too fast. Teachers feel that their role has effectively turned them into data collectors where they administer copious numbers of standardised tests and reports which did not inform them of the knowledge or the understanding of each child's abilities or needs. This does nothing to enhance their learning or give children the best possible start in life. Protecting Childhood feels that children are disengaging from learning in a system which sets many of them up to fail. The self-esteem of some children is being damaged, and both teachers and children in the system are suffering from stress and anxiety.

As a local member and a mother of three, I know that Queensland teachers go to work every day with the children's learning needs as their main focus and we need to ensure that children's and teachers' best interests are at heart when considering the content of this petition. Protecting Childhood through its petition, which garnered over 7,000 signatures, calls on this House to—

1. Observe international evidence-based best practice and ensure:
 - (a) children are six years of age or older to commence being formally taught an incremental age-appropriate national curriculum
 - (b) all learning prior to age six, including prep, is play-based
 - (c) the data collection and reporting burden on teachers is reduced to maximise engage teaching time
2. Organise an independent investigation into the true depth of child and teacher distress in primary schools related to current age-inappropriate curricula and top down pressure to perform and assess too soon.

One of the things we did when in government was give the power back to local schools to make local decisions. Local schools and parents know best about the educational needs of their children rather than bureaucrats in the city. We should continue to empower our local schools and school communities to find the right balance to meet the educational needs of our students. I am supportive of any initiative that will ensure that Queensland students receive the education they deserve, and I look forward to hearing the feedback from local parents, schools and educators regarding the results of this petition. Finally, I want to acknowledge the Protecting Childhood group. Its efforts to galvanise parents and teachers to stand up for their children and teachers, and for children and teachers who are yet to experience the classroom, should be placed on the record and commended.