



Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**


**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 August 2017

**MOTION**

**Schools, Drugs and Weapons**

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (5.19 pm): Earlier today I rose, along with several other members in this House, to speak on the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill, and every member spoke with pride and passion about their schools—in this case, their non-government schools. I heard the member for Glass House speak glowingly about his pocket rocket school and the member for Aspley speak about several of her schools and how well they are performing in their community.

When I go into my schools I see teachers who work hard on an individual basis with students. I see teachers who spend considerable time determining the specific areas of development that each student needs from teachers analysing data from sources like NAPLAN tests to ensure they can get the best out of every one of their students.

When I go into schools I see principals like Natalie Taylor from Hermit Park State School walking through classrooms and watching teachers teach their lessons. I see those same principals meeting with individual teachers, discussing with them the teaching that they saw and providing valuable feedback to those teachers so they can improve their teaching and learning programs for each of their students.

I also hear from parents when I go to P&C meetings or when I hold my market stalls of the outstanding work that teachers and principals are doing in their schools with each and every one of their students. But now we have heard the member for Aspley attacking our state schools and talking them down—attacking the hardworking teachers and hardworking principals in our schools. Rather than talking up the increased NAPLAN results or the increased number of students achieving A to C achievement levels across our state or the performance of their students in their school orchestra or sports carnivals, we have an attack on principals and schools.

I feel as though we need to put some context around the claims that the member for Aspley has put in her motion today. There are 30,000 more students in Queensland state schools than when the LNP were in government, yet we have seen a reduction in the incidents of drug use and misconduct involving an object. Let us drill down into what the issues are given that the member for Aspley is making out that schools are out of control; that students are walking the corridors and playgrounds armed with weapons and ready to use them if someone even looks sideways at them.

I almost have visions of students in classrooms with bandoliers of bullets draped across their chest with six-shooters on their hips from the way the member for Aspley is depicting schools in Queensland. I have visions of students with knives like Mick Dundee's in the playground almost comparing one size to another: 'That's not a knife; this is a knife.' What the member for Aspley calls weapons includes pieces of watermelon, sandwiches, pencils, rulers, glue and even spit balls. These are the weapons the member for Aspley is scaremongering about.

Since we were elected there has been a 10 per cent reduction in incidents of misconduct involving an object. This is a direct result of our efforts to make our schools safer for everyone. I know that principals take great pains before they make a decision to suspend a student. They weigh up what support services have been put in place for the student and what are the individual social and emotional circumstances the student may be going through at any particular time. They look at what classroom and playground procedures they have in place as well as the supportive and instructional methods of the student's classroom teacher or teachers when working with their children. Finally, the principal weighs up the impact of a student's behaviour on other students' safety and learning.

I know that every principal makes the best possible decisions with the information they have available to them to keep their students safe and to ensure students' learning is the major focus in their school. Principals make this decision knowing they have the backing of their parents. They make these decisions knowing they have the backing of their school community. They make these decisions knowing they have the backing of their teachers and their staff. They make these decisions knowing they have the backing of every other student in their school who knows those expectations. Most of all, principals know that they have the backing of the Minister for Education when they suspend students for behaviour that is unsafe and disruptive of other students' learning. Principals know that it takes a partnership between the school, the student and the parent. Parents are the primary teachers in a child's life. Parents need to take responsibility for their children.