




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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ADJOURNMENT

Isolated Children's Parents' Association

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (7.00 pm): During the last parliamentary sittings I had the pleasure of meeting with Kim Hughes, Louise Martin and Tammie Irons from the Isolated Children's Parents' Association, or ICPA as it is commonly known throughout rural Queensland. The ICPA is the parent body representing rural and remote families all over Queensland. With over 1,200 members and interests across all aspects of rural and remote education from early childhood to tertiary education, the ICPA has for many years worked tirelessly with the education department to ensure students in rural and remote areas receive equity in education wherever they live.

The ICPA has called on the Premier to reconsider the inclusion of an ICPA representative on the recently formed Anti-bullying Taskforce. ICPA Queensland is the leading voice on the unique needs of rural and remote children who include approximately 1,400 students who must attend a boarding school due to geographical isolation. Given that the trigger for this task force was largely as a result of the tragic events of a geographically isolated boarding school student in the Northern Territory, targeted rural and remote representation is of the utmost importance. This group of students deserve nothing less.

With year 7 now the first year of secondary school, our rural and remote children are often attending boarding school from the age of 11. The move to boarding school, often thousands of kilometres away, is without doubt one of the biggest and challenging transitions these children will ever make.

The majority have either come from a very small school or a distance education background where they have been taught in a home schoolroom by their mother or a governess. The adjustments to everyday life and culture are enormous—from dormitories full of strangers to attending day school with peers, new timetables, new teachers and rules, and a new city, all while coping with homesickness and the reality that mum and dad will not be there to pick them up in the afternoon.

The transition is compounded by the relatively limited social exposure these students have in comparison to their metropolitan counterparts. The challenge these vulnerable children encounter increases the potential risk of cyberbullying. The connection parents have with their children once they go to boarding school is severely diminished at a time when the level of support required is the greatest. These children in a very short time frame come to rely on the pastoral care from the school community and their peers.

It is imperative that they are set up for success from the very beginning, with tools and strategies to help them deal with the challenges borne out of a world where social media is at the forefront of their lives. I want to add my voice to ICPA Queensland and call on the Premier to reconsider adding an ICPA representative to the Anti-bullying Taskforce or, alternatively, a representative from the Australian Boarding Schools Association. We owe it to these children.