




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR BUDERIM

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MOTION

State Schools, Air Conditioning

 **Mr MICKELBERG** (Buderim—LNP) (5.13 pm): I rise today to speak in support of the shadow minister for education's motion which calls on the Palaszczuk Labor government to adopt the LNP's strong plan to air-condition every Queensland state school classroom. Earlier today here at Parliament House I hosted a group of student leaders from Chancellor State College in my electorate. We discussed their views on the issues we are considering here today. When I told them that we were debating a motion calling on the government to air-condition every Queensland state school classroom, one of the teachers remarked, 'Why do you even need to debate that? Surely it is just common sense.' I think that is fair enough. If only those on the other side of the House would see common sense as well.

We discussed the fact that the Premier and Minister for Education often cite the cost to air-condition every state school classroom as being 'impossible'. The observation was made that government is about managing priorities, and ensuring that our kids get a great education should be one of our first priorities. Clearly for this government it is not.

After the LNP's announcement to air-condition every state school classroom, as we heard earlier, the Minister for Education said, 'I'd love to air-condition—and I am sure the Premier would love to as well—every classroom tomorrow but of course that's impossible.' How the minister arrived at this conclusion is unclear given that her department does not even know how many state school classrooms need to be air-conditioned. The New South Wales Labor opposition clearly do not think it is impossible given that they have announced a policy to air-condition every state school classroom. That policy mirrors the LNP's policy. Governing is about priorities and air-conditioning state school classrooms should be up near the top of that list.

One of the young school leaders from Chancellor, Kenya, explained to me that not having an air-conditioned classroom affects her academic performance, and we know the evidence supports her assertion. NAPLAN results for Queensland schools are below where they need to be. Across Queensland, writing standards for grades 3, 5, 7 and 9—all the levels that were assessed—were below the national standard last year, and our year 7 and 9 results were the second lowest in the nation. Mums, dads, teachers and students all know that kids concentrate better in air-conditioned classrooms.

Perhaps the most significant contribution came from another young student leader at Chancellor State College, Breanna. Breanna requires the assistance of a wheelchair and she explained to me that being confined to a wheelchair she often becomes very hot and uncomfortable as the air is unable to circulate adequately. She explained that it is a significant distraction and it makes it hard for her to concentrate.

As we sit here debating a human rights bill, which is supposedly required to protect the rights of the disabled, surely the very least we can do is listen to the voice of a young student who has to battle the heat and discomfort on a regular basis. Back up the hollow rhetoric with concrete action so that students like Breanna have the same chance as everyone else at getting a great education.

I have been advised that the cost to air-condition the remainder of Chancellor State College is between \$270,000 and \$300,000. The school P&C at Chancellor has air-conditioned as many classrooms as it can possibly do, but it should not be the job of our P&Cs, whose resources are already stretched filling the gaps in this Labor government's school budgets. The very fact that P&Cs are endeavouring to pay for air conditioning is evidence in and of itself that school communities across Queensland see the need. This government needs to recognise this and adopt the LNP's policy.

What strikes me as so ridiculous about this debate is the fact that today we sit here in Parliament House in air-conditioned comfort while students across the state swelter. Even our prisons are air-conditioned, but this government does not see fit to air-condition our classrooms where those who will shape our future work to acquire the knowledge that will set them up for life.

Queenslanders are sick of the petty games and brinkmanship that we see every day from this government. They are sick of the government shifting blame and passing the buck. They are sick of failures of accountability and they are sick of politicians putting their own interests ahead of the community. Air-conditioning every state school classroom is a sensible and much needed policy which the community supports. I implore the government to put aside political point scoring, hear the voice of the community and adopt the LNP's policy to air-condition every state school classroom.