




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Isolated Children's Parents' Association

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.08 pm): I rise to speak about the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Queensland. I was pleased to meet with Wendy Henning and Louise Winten at Parliament House today to discuss issues of concern to them. The ICPA is a great group—

Mr Stevens: Hear, hear!

Mr LISTER: Thank you for that, member for Mermaid Beach. They do great work in advocating for the parents of children in areas where education is a real challenge. They came to me and asked me to emphasise a number of points to the House.

One of the problems is that the former School of the Air system has evolved into a distance education program. That program is now accessed by children from all over, not just those in areas that would have been remote enough to have the School of the Air. That means that there is pressure on facilities and access to teachers in the one week of term that these children from isolated properties attend. I would ask the education minister to look into that. I know that the president of the ICPA did speak with her about this today to see if more resources can be provided to make sure that children from isolated areas are not disadvantaged.

I was amused to find out from them today that the Regional Performing Arts Touring program no longer exists. I remember fondly as a young child having the Queensland Arts Council visit our school periodically to do plays and dramatic art. That was fantastic. It seems that if we were to judge the support of the arts by Bjelke-Petersen in those days against what we see in schools today there is a bit of disparity. I would ask the Queensland government to consider bringing that program back in to make sure that kids in isolated areas have an artistic experience and have some colour in their lives when they are at the school.

Lastly—and this is a federal government matter but I feel it is worth mentioning to the House—the financial assistance that the federal government provides under the Living Away From Home Allowance Scheme is very important. There are eight shires in Queensland alone where there is no high school. That means that the parents of those children on bush properties out west have to send their kids to a boarding school. There are three residential schools in Queensland operated by the government, but two of them are for Indigenous students only. The other one is at Dalby. That is not enough.

It is not any surprise that many parents from the bush, with the help of government subsidies, send their children to boarding schools in places like Toowoomba and Brisbane. I urge the government and the House not to interpret that as being a display of wealth or extravagance. It is a necessity. I would ask all levels of government to do what they can to support parents in providing education for their children away from home.

I have a copy of the report that I was given today. I will table that for the benefit of the House. I will be writing to the minister to summarise what I have said tonight.

Tabled paper: Brochure from Isolated Children's Parents' Association Queensland titled 'Access to equitable education: Strengthening rural & remote communities through education' [203](#).