




Speech By
Sandy Bolton

MEMBER FOR NOOSA

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ADJOURNMENT

Sexual Health Education

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (7.19 pm): The government's Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016-2021 found that within the 15- to 29-year-old age bracket, 60 per cent believed that the oral contraceptive provided protections against STIs, 92 per cent were aware that condoms are an effective form of protection and yet, according to the National Debrief Survey, 75 per cent did not use a condom. The same report noted that the primary source of information for young people is the internet, with *Australia's health 2020* report reporting that 79 per cent of students in years 10, 11 and 12 were using the internet for sexual health information. As the Queensland report noted, schools and GPs can play a greater role around sexual health. However, a response from the education department stated that 'parents and carers make the best choice about educating children about sexuality and relationships'.

With only South Australia and Western Australia collecting data on pregnancy terminations, that data has been used to obtain national averages that indicate that nearly a third of all terminations occurred in the age group up to 24 years. This lack of Queensland-specific information makes it difficult to monitor whether public health interventions are successful in reducing termination rates. During the debate on the decriminalisation of terminations, there was a clear request from members of parliament that sexual health education and access to contraception were to be prioritised in reducing terminations.

A male year 10 student in my electorate shared that, in his 10 years of Queensland public education, he recalled only two sexual education lessons, both of which took place in primary school. Those focussed predominantly on the reproductive system and lifecycle, not on the dangers of STIs and protective measures or the importance of sexual consent. Now in Grade 10, he feels he has been left in the dark at one of the most critical times in his life.

With online pornographic material becoming the education medium of choice for many of our young people, understanding consent and what a healthy relationship looks like is a confusing and sometimes dangerous prospect. All of these issues highlight the need for our children to have a safe space to find the information they need to make informed choices and ask the tricky questions about sex, sexual health and relationships. Whilst the government has implemented a number of reforms and initiatives into schools, including the Respectful Relationships program, there remains a significant gap in sex education for our adolescent and preteen kids. Our education system is the most accessible and effective platform to deliver credible information from trusted and appropriate sources. This includes Life Education and Healthy Harold. However, these are voluntary. We need to mandate those programs into all Queensland schools, providing access regardless of a school's socioeconomic rating, geographic location or individual school decision.