



Speech By
Bart Mellish

MEMBER FOR ASPLEY

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ADJOURNMENT

C&K Craigslea Community Kindergarten

 **Mr MELLISH** (Aspley—ALP) (9.13 pm): I know fellow parents will agree with me when I say that nothing is more important than the safety of our kids. That is something that people from all political parties can agree on. Unfortunately, for well over a month, the parents of the children who have attended Craigslea C&K kindy in my electorate have been in turmoil. They have been stressed over their children's safety and wellbeing, scrambling to find alternative arrangements and desperately working out how to get their children's precious artwork back, held at ransom bizarrely with a \$2,000 price tag.

At a time when child safety is at the forefront of our minds, you would be forgiven for thinking the government would immediately jump into action. Instead, the Crisafulli government's sluggish response was, frankly, too slow. By the time parents approached my office on 1 September, things had truly started to unravel at the kindy. Breakdowns in the workplace environment between the beloved early childhood educators and management meant the parents no longer felt comfortable sending their children into such a chaotic environment.

We listened to the parents' concerns and acted immediately, the very next day contacting the Early Childhood Regulatory Authority, the arm of the education department responsible for the regulation of kindergartens. It was there we got our first pushback. Apparently the department was already aware of issues at the kindy but said that the matter was largely outside its scope. My requests for updates and briefings were treated with a startling lack of urgency. I also wrote to the Office of Fair Trading. A response arrived just last week—too little, too late. I do thank C&K centrally for their efforts on this matter. The circumstances made it difficult for them to resolve directly.

Attempts to raise the alarm with the education minister initially got us nowhere fast, although I did eventually secure a briefing from the department, over one month on from the start of this mess. When asked for details, the minister's office referred me to a recent media release—a media release that did not exist. I do thank the minister for the update, but it was concerning that throughout this entire saga the government was happily sharing more information with journalists than with the parents and staff who were affected or with my office, which had been constantly advocating on their behalf. I wonder where those affected families would be without the significant media coverage this achieved.

One of the most glaring issues here is the total absence of leadership from the Premier. There was certainly no leadership from him when he chose to crack jokes on breakfast TV, making light of the matter by only commenting on the kids' paintings aspect of the issues at the kindy. Parents told me many times that they are particularly concerned with this lack of care from the Premier.

To the relief of all involved, a new location has been found for a kindy set-up. It is great to hear that many of the children caught up in all of this have been reunited. The education minister should ensure his government's failure to prioritise parents' concerns until there was media interest does not happen again.

As the local member, I want to take a moment to thank the parents and the staff. I thank all those affected parents who championed their children and supported the staff that they all adored so much. Your collective campaign of emails and calls kept the pressure on the government and demonstrated the importance of community in this process. I will be keeping a close eye on the situation and the solution, as temporary as it is at the moment, to provide support where I can and ensure this does not happen again in our local area.