



Speech by

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YOUTH VIOLENCE

Mrs STUCKEY (Currumbin—LNP) (12.31 pm): Without doubt many honourable members have seen some of the youth of the Gold Coast showcased for all the wrong reasons in recent weeks with a series of appalling attacks on and by high school children being filmed on mobile phones and then uploaded onto social networking sites like YouTube. Whichever way you look at it, it is wrong—the victim is further humiliated and traumatised by having the attack made public and it promotes violence as some sick kind of sport to be watched by audiences via available technology.

Inevitably and unfairly a school's reputation is tarnished by the unlawful actions of a few. It is good to see the police cracking down on this and charging a 17-year-old for assault for using a mobile phone to film a fight between two teenage girls. Hopefully this will send a strong message to young people that these activities will not be tolerated.

An increase in youth violence on the Gold Coast is a cause for alarm, and alarm bells should be ringing in this government's ears. It has sat back over the last few years and watched these antisocial behaviours escalating, setting up a few task forces rather than addressing the issue by putting in a range of initiatives that would not only deter these activities but also assist in engaging youth in the education process.

Like me, I am sure many honourable members in this House felt sickened by the ferocity of the attacks that they saw on defenceless students and agree that this behaviour must be stopped. Respect, restraint and repercussion are the three Rs that need to be taught in schools as a matter of urgency before there is an avoidable death. Young people need guidance, positive role models and set boundaries. They also need to learn to respect another individual, how to control their anger and that failure to do so will cause them to suffer a negative effect. Strategies must be implemented urgently if we are to restore civility and a positive learning environment.

Calls for school based police officers have fallen on deaf ears for several years when clearly they would have a stabilising influence and give some confidence to those who are being bullied and threatened. We need one appointed swiftly for the southern Gold Coast. As I said, these officers would provide a stabilising influence throughout the school community. The Labor government has frozen all funding for school based police officers, and we were told by the previous minister for police that they have no intention of including them in the next budget. By ignoring the invaluable role such officers play in schools, this Labor government has indicated just how out of touch it is with reality and today's youth.

But what hope have we? Figures show that the Gold Coast has one police officer for every 628 people, compared with the state average of one for 429. What a slap in the face for our dedicated officers. Weekend comments in the *Courier-Mail* stated that Education Queensland was working with police to combat school violence and cyber bullying, highlighting that 47 state schools now had school based police officers. This is highly misleading as schools that have been requesting an officer for years are ignored and, as I said, funding has been frozen.

Another strategy that should be implemented straightaway, even if only as a temporary measure, is the removal of mobile phones and other communication devices from children whilst in school hours. This

occurs in some primary schools and is considered successful in reducing bullying. Tighter monitoring of school attendance is the most effective way to reduce truancy. Penalties should be imposed for those who do not have a medical or other acceptable excuse for nonattendance.

Kids go to school to learn. Getting an education is critical for them to be able to gain meaningful employment in a job market that is tightening. When we look at those expulsion rates, it is worrying to see 300 students expelled and 17,000 suspended. The LNP took some very strong policy into the last election that would curb absenteeism with children having to stay at school in a special class. Many see being expelled as a badge of honour and gets them out of school, which is seen by some to be quite cool.

Other LNP policy would have also seen strengthening of the juvenile justice system so that kids who repeatedly offended and seriously harmed others would have a spell away from home in a not so satisfactory location. However, we did also determine that it was important that children who were placed in some form of detention received skills and an education that they were not able or willing to achieve through the mainstream system.

Mobile phones are a major classroom distraction and deterrence to learning. As I said earlier, forbidding them during class would enhance learning capacity. It is often said that the carrot and stick approach has been not successful in getting people engaged. Well, perhaps it is time for more stick and less carrot.

We are blessed to live on the Gold Coast, which celebrated its 50th birthday recently. Whilst the government has a serious responsibility to make our neighbourhood safe, we also need to come together as a community and parents need to come on board to help guide our youth towards a life where education and respect for others becomes a given.