

PARENTAL SUPPORT AND RESPONSIBILITY BILL 2005

843. Mrs J. HUGHES to the Minister for Community Development:

I would like to welcome Hawker Park Primary School to the house today.

Will the minister advise the house of the progress of the Parental Support and Responsibility Bill 2005?

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN replied:

I thank the member for Kingsley for the question, and I acknowledge the member's interest in the area of child protection. On 30 November 2005, the Legislative Council referred the Parental Support and Responsibility Bill 2005 to the Standing Committee on Legislation to inquire into and report. That committee tabled its report this morning. This was a test for the Liberal opposition. They claim, of course, to have a strong showing in crime and the protection of children. That was declared null and void this morning when the report was tabled. The Liberals show that they are soft on crime and weak on child protection. Why? In the report they opposed the introduction of responsible parenting orders, which is proposed in the Parental Support and Responsibility Bill 2005. Responsible parenting orders involve cases in which parents have repeatedly failed to control their children who have engaged in antisocial behaviour, such as truanting from school, posing a risk -

An opposition member interjected.

Mr D.A. TEMPLEMAN: The opposition was in favour of it last year and this year it has done the opposite. The Liberal Party members in the Legislative Council have not supported it - they have thrown out that part of the bill. Responsible parenting orders allow courts to engage with support services and, if they fail to do so, the courts may impose fines. The responsible parenting initiative and this bill are about intervening early to prevent crime and harm to children. What has the opposition done? It has thrown it out in its recommendation. It claims to be tough on mandatory reporting and child abuse, but when put to the test it has failed dismally. Next time people see a young person doing inappropriate things in the community, they should remind themselves that members opposite have allowed this to happen. They have demonstrated that they are flip-flopping once again.

I urge Liberal Party members in this place who voted in favour of this legislation last year to go back to the party room and make sure that they reverse the recommendation that has been made by their counterparts in the upper house. I will quote from *Hansard* the words of one member opposite for whom I have a great deal of respect. I refer to the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale who said on 1 September last year -

... the Liberal Party supports the bill. I have discussed my minor concerns with my party colleagues and they will support the bill. We -

That is members opposite -

would be foolish not to support something that will help parents raise their children, because being a parent is a very important role.

I fully agree with the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale and I hope that the members of the Liberal Party opposite will go into their party room as soon as possible and talk some sense into their counterparts in the upper house to make sure this bill is passed. This bill is important for the protection of children and for assisting parents by ensuring that there will be early intervention when their children are found doing the wrong thing so that they can get back on the rails.

The report that was tabled this morning is a disgrace. I urge the member for Serpentine-Jarrahdale to go back into his party room and reverse the appalling decision that was made this morning.