

SCHOOLS — VIOLENCE

302. Mr P.J. RUNDLE to the Minister for Education:

I refer to the concerning reports of violence in schools, including the reported attack on a student at Churchlands Senior High School that saw a teacher use her body to shield the student from those attempting to assault her. I also note the deeply concerning data revealed in the Legislative Council that demonstrates that more than 2 200 instances of assault or physically threatening behaviours were reported to the minister's department last year, with a principal being assaulted or threatened once every 40 minutes on average. What is the minister doing to address the worsening trend of violence in schools across the state?

Dr A.D. BUTI replied:

I will start off by making the obvious statement that violence is unacceptable in a school situation—in any situation. Any teacher, principal or other staff member who attends their workplace should be free from violence. Students should be free from violence. We as a government take this issue incredibly seriously. It is a very complicated issue. Back in 2018, the former Minister for Education and Training announced the 10-point action plan against violence, implemented in 2019.

In regard to the data the member referred to, violence has actually decreased since then. It is still too high—one incident is far too high—but there has been a declining trend in reportable offences. Obviously, it is hard to make comparisons year in, year out because of the COVID experience et cetera, but there has been a declining trend in reportable assaults against staff members in the school situation. But it is still far too high.

The member asked what we were doing. We have the 10-point plan, we have a constant revisiting of what can be done and we are looking at what further action we can take. Back in 2022, the former minister had a round table with various unions representing members who make up the workforce at schools, plus parent associations. Changes were made then, and I will look at what further changes should be made.

In regard to the Churchlands Senior High School incident, appropriate responses have been made. It is completely unacceptable that a staff member is assaulted when they are at school.