

## QUESTIONS – Tuesday 14 February 2017 - School Truancy Laws

Mr GUYULA to MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

Are families being double punished by being fined under NT school truancy laws and having their Centrelink support stopped under federal school attendance laws?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, attendance is critical and vital for our children if they are to make improvements in the long term. When we talk about some of the issues we are faced with today, such as youth crime—we all know a child who attends school to gain literacy and numeracy skills, and is engaged in schooling, gets onto a pathway of further education and training.

Getting kids to school is vital and is one of the key initiatives for this government and the federal government. Senator Nigel Scullion has been adamant about that, and has put considerable amounts of funding into the Remote School Attendance Strategy, as well as the School Engagement Strategy. So the federal government knows that kids need to go to school, and particularly Indigenous students in our remote areas need to go to school. This government, and the previous government, know that kids must go to school. It is a priority.

Member for Nhulunbuy, this would not be an issue if parents sent their kids to school. If a child is not attending school—and some of these initiatives were under the previous government, and I have been very happy to continue to support every child going to school every day because there are no silver bullets. Kids must go to school. There are a number of measures in place if children are not attending school. The first measure is about a positive AIW, and the school community working together to get the child to school. It is about case managing that child, having conversations with families—parents and grandparents—to get that child to school.

Schools work very hard to provide positive things. There are incentives for a child to go to school such as going on footy trips at the end of the year, getting access to additional technology and other positive things that schools use to get kids to attend. If they are not attending school, it is a last resort to fine a parent; that measure is only done as a last resort. Hopefully there are very few times when a parent is fined. The quarantining of welfare, and the finding of things where the federal government and the Northern Territory Government work together—those things are last resorts, and the way for a parent to avoid that is to get their child to school. I am firm and adamant about that. Every child needs to go to school every day in the Northern Territory.

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