



Minister caught out 8 December 2003

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said Education Minister Trish White is apparently unable to respond to parental and community concern about sex education.

Mrs Penfold said the Minister stated on ABC's Stateline on 24 October 2003 that to date she hadn't had "one parent of a child actually doing the course complain to my office".

"Yet the Minister's staff met with a delegation of three Port Lincoln parents on 29 September.

"The Minister said she was unable to meet the delegation but that her staff would pass on all that was said to her. The staff were also given a written submission to present to the Minister," Mrs Penfold said.

"My constituents were singularly unimpressed by the Minister's comment that no parent of a child doing the course had contacted her with objections," she said.

"Either the Minister has a very poor memory or she did not get her staff to brief her about the meetings and did not read the letters and her responses to the parents, or she is deliberately trying to change the facts.

"Whichever is the case, she is unfit for the position of Minister for Education and Children's Services, a position she holds in trust for all South Australians, particularly our children."

"The Minister appears unable to distinguish between a request for improvement coupled with suggestions for improvement, and outright rejection of the program," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the delegation represented about 40 parents, while letters objecting the course as it stands have been written to the Minister, the Premier and other Ministers, and petitions containing more than 6000 signatures have been presented to Parliament.

"Despite all this parental and community concern, the Minister is adamant that everything is OK," she said.

Mrs Penfold said interviewer Ian Henschke, on the same Stateline programme on 24 October, asked the Minister if she would change the teachers' handbook.

"The Minister sidestepped the question, perhaps unaware that the teachers' handbook has already been changed in some particulars that were questioned as either inaccurate or unnecessary," she said.

Mrs Penfold said the majority of the sex education course is acceptable however some sessions are considered too detailed while other points are omitted.

"No one has come to me saying they don't want sex education. All that has ever been asked is that changes be made."

Mrs Penfold said a delegation of Port Lincoln parents who met with SHine and Department of Children's Services personnel in Adelaide on 23 October 2003 were advised that certain areas of the course were being tidied up.

"This admission confirmed that there are problem areas, not just problem parents and troublemakers, as claimed by the Minister."

Mrs Penfold said a participating parent was told, at the same meeting, that students are given take-home material after every sex education lesson.

"Since neither the parent nor the student had sighted such material, the parent contacted the school only to be told by the teacher that she had no idea what the parent was talking about.

"If the Minister is unaware of this lapse in protocol – and her knowledge and interest in the issue is open to question – I ask her to investigate this matter," Mrs Penfold said.

SEX EDUCATION TRIAL PROGRAM 30 April, 2003

The sex education information evening in the Port Lincoln High School on Tuesday 6th May is now only available for parents of students attending the school in years 8, 9 and 10 according to advice given to Member for Flinders Liz Penfold.

She has been advised that the meeting scheduled to start at 7.30pm is not open to members of the public.

Mrs. Penfold said a school spokesperson said that "the school is providing information for parents additional to that already provided about the curriculum content of the program".

The controversial program is being trialed in 14 schools across the State.

The principal of Port Lincoln High School advised if members of the community want to find out more information, she would be happy for them to contact her and she will arrange another meeting time.

Mrs. Penfold said that all schools should have a public meeting open to parents of current and future students where all resource material was disclosed so that interested parents could make an informed decision on the course.

She was aware of one school where the Principal had removed some of the material provided.

"Port Lincoln is one of a number of trial sites for the new sex education course and parents have a right to look at it carefully as it will become part of the normal curriculum in future years" she said.

Mrs. Penfold said she wanted it made clear that she totally supported sex education however parents must have a say in what is appropriate for their children.

She said the opt out clause was inadequate as it would put huge pressure on the students who were removed. "It would be much better to remove any material that is considered to be inappropriate for the course," Mrs. Penfold said.

EXPLICIT SEX COURSE TO BE TRIALLED AT PORT LINCOLN

9 April 2003

Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said everyone should be aware of the explicit nature of sections of the sex education curriculum that is to be trialled at Port Lincoln High School next term.

She urged parents and members of the public who may be concerned about the issue to attend the information night to be held in the staff room of the Port Lincoln High School on Tuesday May 6. The evening begins at 7.30 pm. Mrs Penfold said the education program is for 13 to 16 year olds (Years 8 to 10).

She said public and parental pressure could possibly result in the withdrawal of sections of the program. While supporting sex education in schools, some sections may be considered overly offensive.

"I have been advised that the program includes asking students to organise a series of 'safe practices' cards into safe and unsafe practices, including "using a sex toy" and "using a device for sexual arousal", and role playing homosexual behaviour," she said.

Mrs Penfold said Port Lincoln is one of 14 high schools in South Australia where this pilot program is to be trialled prior to its proposed introduction to all public high schools.

SHINE SA (Sexual Health Information Networking and Education SA) is coordinating the project in collaboration with the Department of Education and Children's Services and the Department of Human Services.