

Aurukun a 'failed social experiment', Queensland federal MP Warren Entsch says



PHOTO: Ms Palaszczuk met Mayor Dereck Walpo and Councillors.

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Aurukun is a "failed social experiment", far north Queensland federal MP Warren Entsch has said, after the Cape York town's school closed for the second time in two weeks and its teachers were removed over safety concerns.

Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk, three senior ministers and the Police Commissioner have arrived in Aurukun to hold talks with the mayor and community members after 20 teachers were forced to leave the community.

The school's principal was allegedly assaulted at least twice in night-time skirmishes, prompting security concerns for all school staff.

Police said violent incidents around 3:00am on Wednesday morning involved children as young as six.

The number of police patrolling the community has been bolstered from the usual eight officers to 21.

Cape York Indigenous leader Noel Pearson, who runs the school, accused Mr Entsch of failing to achieve anything for the community.

But Mr Entsch said the troubled youths were products of Mr Pearson's school system and it should be reviewed.

"I find it amazing people like Noel [Pearson] are quick to walk away from this and blame the State Government, blame the Federal Government, blame the police for this," he said.

"We need to have a look at the effectiveness of the programs and the impact that those programs have had on the community, and I think that's where we need to start.

"For the hundreds of millions that we have spent in there I think we're getting poor value for money.

"What we've got to do is do a review on the programs, the system of education there, personally I think we need to go back to the previous system."

Mr Pearson said on Thursday the recent trouble in Aurukun was not the only issue for teachers. He told ABC radio living and working conditions for teachers could be compared to war-torn Afghanistan.

"There is a terrible insecurity in relation to the premises that teachers live in," he said.

"It's disgusting to go out to remote areas — the hardest gigs in education — this is the Afghanistan of teaching, it is that hard.

"The least they can expect is good accommodation that is quite safe and we haven't guaranteed that."

Curfew being considered

Meanwhile, the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) said imposing a curfew in Aurukun was one of the options being considered to prevent night-time violence.

QTU spokesman Kevin Bates said Aurukun mayor Dereck Walpo wanted to discuss the possibility of a curfew.

Mr Bates said a curfew might help the community prevent a repeat of the violence, but it might be hard to enforce.

"This community has a whole suite of options open to it and that's one that's certainly worth considering," he said.

Cr Walpo said he had a list of issues he wanted to talk to Ms Palaszczuk about, including plans for the students' education while the school was closed.

"We had a good stakeholder's meeting here with all our service providers that are in the community and we've put some dot points together, but I can't indulge with that at this time until we've engaged with the Premier and the ministers and see what they think of our positive dot points," he said.

On Thursday, the Queensland Government also announced it wanted the bauxite mine to be developed in Aurukun to create jobs and other economic opportunities.

It said it was working with the resources company Glencore.