

~~What is even more exciting for our community is that we are now seeing developers in the Upper Ross working together to deliver solutions that will have huge benefits for our community. An example of that is Celestino, the proponents of a \$2 billion Pinnacles master planned community in Kelso at the foothills of the Pinnacles. They are working with Wingate Properties to identify, plan for and fund traffic solutions for the Upper Ross that I believe will help reduce the need for the government—the taxpayers—to provide this type of infrastructure. This is the type of innovation that we need to deliver better outcomes for people in our communities. Celestino is a proponent of a 5,100 lot Pinnacles project and is currently working through the planning and environment courts to progress the development to approval stage.~~

~~This project has the support of not only me—I want investment in the area and I want jobs in the area as do the thousands of people who live there—but also the newly elected councillor for division 4, Mark Molechino. He joins Mayor Jenny Hill's team. The community overwhelmingly vote him in.~~

~~The handbrake is off. We are seeing the local council and the state government working together to deliver for Thuringowa. This new council has already demonstrated it is far more forward thinking than the past LNP dominated council, which for too long ignored the pleas of the Upper Ross community which wanted to see more development and more jobs in our area. The previous council had the view that the Upper Ross was too far out—out of the way. They thought it did not deserve the attention and focus that Townsville's northern growth corridor receives.~~

~~That is now changing. No longer will the wants of the people of the Upper Ross be ignored. We believe that with our close proximity and connectivity to the ring road and close links to James Cook University, Lavarack Barracks and our tertiary hospital that we are now positioned as the next logical sequence in development for Townsville. We can be the new economic driver for Townsville with projects by Wingate, Pinnacles and the Lancini group leading the way.~~


~~Celestino's CEO, John Vassallo, is now working to deliver with the Sydney Science Park in western Sydney. This is a place that has huge similarities with the Upper Ross—a place that was for a long time unfairly derided as backward and rural. It is now the engine for growth for Sydney. The Upper Ross Pinnacles project is going to be exactly like that. It is an exciting project for the area. They are proposing a sister science park as the epicentre of the Pinnacles project. I am looking forward to seeing this development as many people are. We need jobs in the area. I am working with these developers to help them do that.~~

~~**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The time for matters of public interest has now finished.~~

019

EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Introduction

 **Hon. KJ JONES** (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (12.29 pm): I present a bill for an act to amend the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 for particular purposes. I table the bill and the explanatory notes. I nominate the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016.

Tabled paper: Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016, explanatory notes.

The Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 makes significant education amendments regarding the prep year of schooling, the teaching profession and non-state school funding arrangements. The bill will ensure that all Queensland children start their school education in prep. It will improve the regulation of teaching in Queensland by streamlining governance, improving the disciplinary framework and strengthening the ability of the Queensland College of Teachers to protect students. It will improve the administration of the Commonwealth and state funding to non-state schools by establishing statutory arrangements for the recovery of state and Commonwealth funding paid to non-state schools in excess of their entitlements. The bill will also improve oversight of non-state schools by allowing the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board to share information with law enforcement agencies and reduce the collection of unnecessary school survey data.

Prep was introduced in 2007 by the then Labor government. The introduction of prep gave Queensland parents the opportunity to ensure their children had a strong foundation for success at school. Evidence indicates that children who participate in high-quality early childhood programs such

as prep gain significant long-term benefits including higher levels of completed education and subsequent employment.

Since the introduction of prep we have seen an improvement in Queensland's NAPLAN results. Prep is generally recognised as the first year of schooling in Queensland, and most Queensland children already undertake prep before commencing year 1. However, prep is not compulsory, and there is a small number of children who do not undertake prep before enrolling in year 1. These children are missing out on the benefits of prep. That is why on 24 January this year the Premier and I announced that prep would become the compulsory first year of school education for all Queensland children.

The bill makes prep the compulsory first year of schooling by providing that a principal of a state or non-state school must not enrol a child into year 1 unless the child has undertaken prep in a state or non-state school, the child has undertaken education in another jurisdiction that is equivalent to prep, the child was registered for home education in the year prior to enrolment in a state or non-state school, or the principal is satisfied that the child is ready for schooling in year 1 taking into account the child's social, emotional and developmental attributes.

The bill does not lower the compulsory schooling age of six years and six months. It provides flexibility for parents to determine whether their child should enter prep in the year they turn five by 30 June or in the following year. This is a significant feature of this amendment, ensuring that parents retain the choice about when their child is ready for schooling. However, subject to the exceptions I have already outlined, the law will now require that a child always enrolls in prep first. This aligns with existing state school policy. The bill also lowers the age at which a child may be registered or provisionally registered for home education so that prep-age children can register for home education.

This bill also strengthens the Queensland College of Teachers' powers to suspend a teacher's registration to keep our children safe. The bill will make significant amendments to the regulation of the teacher profession to strengthen the ability of the Queensland College of Teachers to act in the best interests of children, to protect the safety and wellbeing of Queensland students and to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession. It will provide a contemporary and more streamlined governance structure for the college and improve the teacher disciplinary framework.

Protecting the safety and wellbeing of our students is our No. 1 priority. This bill gives the college stronger powers to suspend a teacher's registration where the college reasonably believes the teacher poses an unacceptable risk of significant harm to children. A decision to suspend a teacher's registration will be reviewed by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT. A person cannot work in a school when their registration is suspended. Currently the threshold for suspending a teacher's registration requires the college to believe that there is an imminent risk of harm.

It is important that we provide the college with the ability to act early and suspend a teacher's registration when that is in the best interests of children. This current threshold of imminent risk is too high and does not align with the removal of educators in the early childhood education and care sector because of risks to children.

This bill will require the college to notify the Public Safety Business Agency, which is responsible for child related employment screening, when they suspend a teacher's registration. These changes will help prevent the teacher moving between schools and help prevent the person working in other child related employment. To complement the legislative reforms, the Department of Education and Training will improve teacher recruitment practices to enhance its capacity to obtain information about a prospective teacher's disciplinary history.

In terms of other changes, early notification from schools about child harm matters is important to allow the college to assess whether immediate registration action is required for the safety and wellbeing of students. The bill also clarifies the existing notification provision to give greater guidance to schools about when to notify the college about these matters.

The bill enables the college to provide a more contemporary and streamlined governance structure. We are reducing the size of the college's board from 17 to 15 members. To do this we are removing one of the minister's nominees and the Queensland Public Sector Union representative. The bill will also ensure the chief executive and remaining minister's nominees will have skills and expertise in corporate, strategic and/or regulatory functions. Consistent with stakeholder feedback, a majority teacher representation on the board is maintained. I thank everybody who was involved in the consultation leading up to this reform to enable us to reduce the size of the board in the best interests of the college.

The bill allows the college's internal disciplinary committee—renamed the Professional Capacity and Teacher Conduct Committee—to consider teacher impairment as a possible reason for a minor disciplinary matter. This aims to address teacher discipline in a more supportive and non-punitive manner where impairment has caused or contributed to the behaviour of a teacher. The committee will be able to order a health assessment by a registered health practitioner where they reasonably believe impairment may have contributed to the teacher's behaviour.

The bill requires the committee to have an appropriately qualified registered health practitioner on its membership when considering impairment related disciplinary matters and in determining appropriate action. QCAT already has similar powers for serious disciplinary matters involving impairment—that is, matters where suspension or cancellation of registration is a likely outcome. These amendments do not relate to decisions about teacher registration. They will not impact on the obligation on all schools to provide reasonable adjustments.

Other reforms being progressed in this bill allow the college to consider a broader range of information to determine whether a ground for disciplinary action exists. This will allow the college to investigate allegations such as those raised in the media about teacher conduct. Currently, the college is limited to acting where there is 'disciplinary information', which is essentially defined to mean a formal complaint or notification by a school.

While this amendment widens the type of information that can be used to commence consideration of whether disciplinary action is warranted, the college must still form a reasonable belief that there is a ground for discipline before taking disciplinary action. This means the college would need to obtain reliable evidence to form the reasonable belief, regardless of how the matter initially came to the college's attention. This prevents the college from acting on rumour or innuendo.

The bill also deals with the recovery of funding from non-state schools. Eligible non-state schools may receive funding from both the state and Australian governments. The 2014 Queensland Audit Office report into the oversight of recurrent grants to non-state schools highlighted that the lack of formal mechanism to recover overpaid funding was a weakness of the funding program. The bill addresses this weakness by providing a head of power for the minister's policy that will outline the procedure for recovery of overpaid funding; that it is a condition of payment of the funding that overpayments are repaid to the state in accordance with the procedure prescribed in the policy; and, if funding is overpaid to a non-state school, that the amount of the overpayment may be recovered as a debt owed to the state.

Under the Commonwealth Australian Education Act 2013, the Australian government funds Queensland non-state schools by providing funding to the Queensland government which must then be passed directly to the relevant non-state school. It is a condition of funding under the Commonwealth act that the state has a debt recovery arrangement in place with eligible non-state schools. Without such an arrangement in place the Queensland government could be liable for a debt owed to the Australian government by a non-state school. To address this issue the bill implements a statutory debt recovery arrangement that meets the requirements of the Commonwealth act and enables Queensland to assign the right to recover any debt owed by a non-state school to the Commonwealth minister.

This bill ensures that all students reap the benefits of undertaking the prep year of schooling. It supports the education of Queensland children in both state and non-state schools and ensures a modern and responsive teacher registration system. I commend the bill to the House.

020

First Reading

Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (12.40 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a first time.

Question put—That the bill be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

Referral to the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! In accordance with standing order 131, the bill is now referred to the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee.