

~~business and community was pivotal in the overall urban redevelopment of our fine city of Townsville for the people of North Queensland. This news provides encouragement and much needed positivity for the business, private and construction sector. We are restoring business confidence. This job alone provides up to 200 local jobs. It is a \$30 million investment and it is a sure sign that our election commitment of delivering the \$250 million Townsville stadium is indeed a real catalyst for infrastructure investment to deliver more jobs in Townsville for Townsville families.~~

~~Many constituents who have contacted me in Thuringowa are excited by this proposition. CQU is providing a range of courses for locals, including something close to my heart which is the paramedical science degree. I have a good working relationship with the vice chancellor. Many former peers from my previous vocation as a paramedic are now teaching the paramedical science degree at the CQU Townsville campus. They bring real important life experience to the classroom for future paramedics who will also hopefully gain employment locally.~~

~~Mr Peter Honeycombe has a vision for investment in this space and should be commended for his belief in Townsville and that our city is big enough for two universities. I am not taking anything away from James Cook University which also contributes so much into our local economy. They provide great and commendable work in the areas of medicine, nursing, research, science, agriculture and the environment. They are just some of the impressive areas that I have seen firsthand when visiting JCU.~~

~~Recently I had the opportunity to tour the Brisbane CQU city campus in Ann Street. It too is impressive and provides some real insight into the Townsville redevelopment of CQU. CQU hopes to reach 3,000 students over the coming years and is seeing good growth in numbers since their arrival in our city in 2010. As reported in the *Townsville Bulletin* yesterday Monday, 15 August by the vice chancellor—~~

~~'There is no doubt CQU's investment in infrastructure, support services and new courses in Townsville have shown that local students are reacting positively to additional support and course options,' she said. 'We are constantly fielding queries and interest and expect many more at our CQUni Townsville Open Day next month.'~~

~~This campus is being fast tracked and we expect to see it finished in the first few months of 2017. I commend CQU's investment in Townsville and welcome the real jobs it will bring into our local economy.~~

GRAMMAR SCHOOLS BILL

Introduction



Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (12.36 pm): I present a bill for an act to regulate the governance and administration of grammar schools, and to amend this act, the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Act 2001, the Fair Work (Commonwealth Powers) and Other Provisions Act 2009, the Information Privacy Act 2009 and the Right to Information Act 2009 for particular purposes. I table the bill and explanatory notes and I nominate the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee to consider the bill.

Tabled paper: Grammar Schools Bill 2016.

Tabled paper: Grammar Schools Bill 2016, explanatory notes.

I rise today to introduce the Grammar Schools Bill 2016. Queensland has eight grammar schools which were established between 1863 and 1892, each run by a board of trustees. These schools hold an important role in the history of education in Queensland. Historically, the Queensland government established grammar schools as a form of community-government partnership. It was a cost effective way for the state government to support secondary school education without assuming the full cost of establishing a state high school.

Queensland grammar schools provide a non-discriminatory secular education and a great example of the benefits of community-government cooperation. The establishment, governance and regulation of grammar schools is currently provided for by the Grammar Schools Act 1975 and the Grammar Schools Regulation 1975. The Grammar Schools Bill 2016 will replace the existing Grammar Schools Act with modern legislation that meets the contemporary needs of our grammar schools. In general, the bill maintains the current regulatory regime for grammar schools with some important reforms which removes the power to establish future grammar schools, provides flexibility for board appointments to facilitate board transition and rejuvenation, reduces red tape while maintaining financial accountability and enhances board autonomy for the conduct of board business.

I will now outline these reforms in more detail. As I have already said, grammar schools have played an important role in the education system of our state. However, no new grammar schools have been established since 1892. The contemporary approach is for the state to provide secondary education through state schools and to regulate and fund the provision of education by non-government schools. It is no longer considered necessary for the state to retain the power to establish grammar schools into the future and the bill therefore removes the ability to establish future grammar schools. However, in recognition of the unique status of Queensland grammar schools as statutory bodies, the bill retains the current offences prohibiting the use of the term 'grammar' by non-grammar schools.

020

Currently, Queensland grammar schools are governed by a seven-member board of trustees appointed by the Governor in Council. Four members are nominated for appointment by the minister and three members are appointed following an election process conducted by the board. During consultation, some grammar schools raised concerns that the fixed number of members and the inability to stagger appointments to the board created difficulties for succession planning and board renewal. The bill addresses these concerns in two ways. Firstly, the bill modifies the membership of the board to provide that the board consist of four members nominated for appointment by the minister, three members appointed following an election process and up to two additional members appointed at the request of a board. The additional two members may be chosen by a grammar school board to be nominated for appointment and the minister must nominate the additional members if the minister is satisfied that the person meets the suitability criteria for appointment. Secondly, while the bill provides that the term of appointment for a member of a board is four years, it also allows the board to request a shorter term of appointment for a person nominated for appointment by the minister. This will allow grammar school boards to choose to stagger board appointments and move towards a model in which the term of appointment for all members does not end at the same time.

In addition, these two amendments will provide boards with a greater ability for succession planning and board rejuvenation. These amendments will also provide boards with the capacity to respond to emergent issues for which the board needs a specific skill set. The bill ensures that people nominated by the minister for appointment to a board are appropriate by providing that the minister must be satisfied that the person has a sufficient understanding or the ability to rapidly acquire a sufficient understanding of the legislation applying to grammar schools and the skills, experience or expertise in commerce, corporate governance, economics, finance, law, management or education, or another area the minister considers relevant or necessary, to support the board in performing its functions.

At the request of grammar schools, the bill also strengthens the requirements for the minister to consult with boards prior to making a nomination, and I strongly support this amendment. It provides that the minister must consult with the board prior to making the nomination and take into account the board's submissions about the proposed nomination, including the effect of the appointment on the board's composition.

The current grammar schools legislation requires boards to comply with prescriptive requirements relating to financial management. For example, the act mandates the types of accounts the board must maintain and includes prescriptive procedures that must be undertaken before borrowing state funds. The bill does not replicate these prescriptive requirements. This bill reduces red tape on grammar school boards, without reducing the oversight of grammar school viability. The board of trustees for each grammar school is a statutory body and is subject to state legislation that regulates and provides for the oversight of statutory bodies. This includes the Financial Accountability Act 2009 and the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangements Act 1982. Grammar school boards are audited by the Queensland Auditor-General. The bill retains the capacity for the minister to appoint an administrator if the minister has concerns about a school's financial viability. The state borrowing regime is also strictly controlled through administrative practices.

Finally, a number of provisions in the current act prescribe operational details relating to how a grammar school board shall conduct business and proceedings at meetings. The bill modernises these provisions and allows boards a greater ability to determine their own business practices, while still ensuring appropriate procedures around decision-making. As I have outlined, the bill contains modest but important reforms that will ensure that grammar schools continue to play a role in Queensland's education system into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

~~First Reading~~

~~Hon. KJ JONES (Ashgrove ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Tourism and Major Events) (12.42 pm): I move~~