



Speech by

JOHN MICKEL, MLA **STATE MEMBER FOR LOGAN**

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EDUCATION [ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS] BILL

Mr MICKEL (Logan—ALP) (5.52 p.m.): I thank the minister for her help in ensuring the accreditation of the Parklands Christian College, which opened in my electorate earlier this year. The school made application last year and, as I understand it, the school was caught in a no-man's-land when the state election was called earlier this year. I praise the professionalism of the school principal, Mr David Baskerville, in his dealings with the department. He and the school pastor, Rodney Job, understood the bind the government was in when it was in caretaker mode, ensured all of the documentation was ready for the new government and the new minister—and I congratulate her on this—and was able to make sure that the school was up and running and that the procedures were all in place.

I want also to mention in tonight's debate the Catholic schools of St Bernardines at Regents Park and St Francis College at Crestmead for the very caring and highly professional way they care for the students but importantly reach out to a wider community, particularly with the St Bernardines community, through the employment programs their social justice group is running. It has been of enormous benefit to the parish, to the school and, as I said, to the wider community. St Bernardines as a school is undergoing expansion with the grant it received from the state government, while St Francis College benefited about two or three years ago from a joint state-federal initiative. These are very important schools in that they provide a choice for parents but they also provide the diversity that makes education in my electorate so exciting.

With that, I do urge caution on the Teachers Union in the strident way it wants to debate the non-government schools issue with the current funding issues. As I told the school principals forum a few weeks ago, they need to be aware that none—not one—of the non-government schools in my electorate would consider themselves elitist or well-heeled. They simply offer a choice for parents who want their children to attend a religious school. These are not private schools, they are Catholic schools, and they want to be seen in that way.

I also want to acknowledge the important contribution that a school like St Philomena's at Park Ridge is playing, and I wish to praise the work of father Gerard Hogan and the parents and friends association for reviving parts of what was the old Southport State School on the Park Ridge site. Father Hogan has been transferred to Melbourne, but his work as a founding principal should be acknowledged.

A school in my electorate which was the scene of a dramatic revival in fortunes was the old Kingston Infants School, which is now well represented in the electorate of Woodridge by my colleague the member for Woodridge. That school, after it ceased to be the infant school, was left derelict and was the scene oftentimes of wanton destruction until the Mueller College purchased it and set it up now as the Groves Christian College. I understand from the member for Woodridge that it is now a thriving school and one that provides opportunities for students and parents throughout central and western Logan City, north Beaudesert and certainly southern Brisbane for the excellent range of educational opportunities it is providing.

None of these schools objects to a proper and thorough accreditation process, which I understand this bill provides. But at the same time I want to acknowledge the dedication, the diversity and the freedom of choice that that non-government sector provides very importantly for the electorate of Logan.