



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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EDUCATION [QUEENSLAND STUDIES AUTHORITY] BILL

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (12.11 p.m.): It is a great pleasure to rise in support of this very important bill before the House. But before I speak to the bill, I wish to alert the House to something else that happened recently which is extremely important, as well. One of our members and his lovely wife are expecting their first child on 16 September this year. I speak of none other than the honourable member for Mansfield, Phil Reeves, and his wonderful partner, Megan. Yesterday he was wandering around the chamber showing the first photograph of the little one. All I can say to him and Megan is that I am pleased to see that the little one looks a lot more like Megan than him.

Mr Reeves: You could tell that after 10 weeks, could you?

Mr BRISKEY: I could. It is a very clear photograph. Congratulations, Phil and Megan. Our best wishes to you both.

Getting back to the bill, as I said at the outset, this is a very important piece of legislation and it gives me great pleasure to speak in support of it. I was pleased to see that both the opposition and the Liberal Party in this place also support this legislation. Why should we be supporting it? It is obvious. It is in the best interests of students and in the best interests of the children of Queensland. Everything we do in this place and every piece of legislation that the Minister for Education presents to this place has to have the best interests of children in mind. Every decision made in Mary Street—and many are made down there—every decision made in district offices and every decision made in the principal's office always should have the best interests of the students in mind. This bill does exactly that. That is why I am very pleased to support it. I am sure that every member of this place is supporting it, as well.

Before I go on to talk in detail about certain sections of the bill, I want to say—as has been said in the past—that this bill combines the three statutory bodies that exist at present, that is, the Queensland School Curriculum Council established in 1996, the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority established in 1990 and the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies established in 1998. I want to say a few words about the board and refer to its history.

The precursor to the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies was the Board of Secondary School Studies, which came about in response to a very important report in the history of Queensland education, that is, the Radford report. In his contribution yesterday, the member for Beaudesert made mention of my father-in-law, Les Winkle, who was the secretary to the Radford committee and became the first executive officer of the then Board of Secondary School Studies. That was in late 1971, and 1972 was the final year of external senior examinations. I am sure that I am one of many in this place who were part of that last external senior examination in 1972. After that the board introduced school based assessment. Les continued in that position as a first executive officer until late in 1978 when John Pitman took over. John continued in his role with the board and then the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies until his retirement last year. I am giving this short history of the board because I want to pay a tribute to John Pitman.

Some members would know that John led the original board after Les took up his position as director of secondary education in Queensland. John made that board and the subsequent

Board of Senior Secondary School Studies into an educational authority that was respected throughout the world. At his retirement function there were many glowing reports from all over the world about his leadership of that board, especially with respect to certification and assessment. So I would like to put on record the fine work that John did in his role with the board.

Dr Lesley Clark: Hear, hear!

Mr BRISKEY: The honourable member for Barron River agrees, and I am pleased that she does.

In his speech yesterday, the honourable member for Beaudesert said—

As early as the 1980s, with people like Les Winkle, the father-in-law of the member for Cleveland, as Director-General of Education—

he was never the director-general, but he does thank the member very much for that promotion—

we had a pure education system which did not say, 'We will train kids for vocation.' That side of it was taken by TAFE. We remember the very famous Roy Wallace. There was no way in the wide world that Les Winkle and Roy Wallace would ever agree that the educational system could be combined such that education was for a job.

That is very true about Roy Wallace. As Executive Director of TAFE, Roy Wallace was extremely careful that TAFE was never taken into education; it was to be a separate part of the education system mainly concerned with skills training for those post-high school students.

I am well aware that in the 1980s—I think it was 1981 or 1982—Les Winkle put to the then Director-General of Education and also to the Executive Director of TAFE, Roy Wallace, that he wanted to put TAFE subjects into year 11 so that students who were not interested in tertiary education could study TAFE subjects in our schools. What a great pity they did not listen to him, because we have seen now from having TAFE subjects available to our year 11 and year 12 students what a great benefit that is to them. Les took that fight up to Roy, the then director-general, and failed. But I was very pleased to hear from him only last night that he did take up that fight. What a change it would have made to the system if those subjects had been made available to students in year 11 and year 12. It would have meant an increase in retention rates. It would have meant more students completing year 11 and year 12. The benefits of 12 years of education are beyond doubt. The research is crystal clear. If people complete 12 years of education we will have a happier, healthier and more successful adult population.

The three bodies that I and many other members have spoken about have done an excellent job and have served Queensland well. I have mentioned John Pitman from the board. Jim Tunstall from the curriculum council and his staff have served Queensland well since that body was established. Bernadette Roberts, executive officer of TEPA, has likewise served Queensland well.

As I have said, these bodies have served Queensland well but, due to ever-increasing changes in our community, a smarter and more efficient process is needed to ensure that our children are given access to the best educational services available. This bill unites these three bodies, providing a new legislative regime which will contribute to higher levels of completion of year 12 or its equivalent to improve the social cohesion and social and human capital of Queensland. It will also deal with syllabus development, assessment, certification and tertiary entrance procedures and articulation to post-school options across diverse preschool to year 12 educational settings and contexts; support the development of a coherent set of principles which inform the conditions of learning across the span of schooling and build the foundations for lifelong learning; provide statutory arrangements that will operate to enable schooling sectors and individual schools to achieve their common and specific objectives to meet the needs of their clients; and support efficient transition between stages of schooling, formal and informal learning environments and to post-school destinations and active citizenship.

This bill also contains amendments to the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 which will enable the director-general of Education to have input on syllabus guidelines and tests that have been approved by the statutory body. To enable the statutory body to be recognised as a Public Service office, amendments will also be made to the Public Service Act 1996.

The amalgamation of the three bodies came about through an exhaustive consultation process, of which many members have already spoken. At the time I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister for Education I had the privilege and honour of leading that process at its inception, during the last parliamentary term. I take this opportunity to thank all those who were involved in that process, especially those with whom I sat around the table at Mary Street for many hours. At the end of my contribution I will speak about one particular member of that group. I enjoyed that process. I enjoyed my time as parliamentary secretary for education, I guess because of my interest in education and having four children in the system. Also I guess it is because of my past as a teacher in the state system.

Mr Reeves: We appreciated you coming to our schools and having a look, too.

Mr BRISKEY: I did enjoy visiting your schools as well.

Mr Reeves: Just like the present parliamentary secretary.

Mr BRISKEY: Absolutely.

Dr Lesley Clark: We are lucky to have had two fine parliamentary secretaries for education.

Mr BRISKEY: I thank the honourable member for Barron River for that compliment.

Mr Neil Roberts: I did it for three weeks at the beginning of our term.

Mr BRISKEY: And you did extremely well, so the reports came back to me.

Part of that process was putting together a green paper. That green paper, *Student achievement in Queensland*, was disseminated widely throughout the community. It invited students, teachers, parents, schools, statutory authorities, education and training agencies, universities, industry and the community to provide written submissions. To ensure that every interested party was able to comment on the paper, the body also met with regional communities throughout Queensland.

The green paper contained three options. The first option proposed minimal changes with minor adjustments to the responsibilities of the Queensland School Curriculum Council and the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. Option 2 proposed the amalgamation of the Queensland School Curriculum Council and the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies with the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority, either incorporated into a single authority or retained as a separate authority. Option 3 proposed the amalgamation of all three bodies into one single authority.

These meetings were highly successful and we received much feedback. In fact, over 200 written submissions were received. Representatives from Education Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools Queensland established a working group to provide a draft report after analysis of the feedback. The draft report identified the need for a single authority, its primary focus being an alignment of mechanisms for addressing retention rates, welfare and service provision to students and better management of the areas of transition at both year 10 to year 11 and year 12 to post-school destinations.

The report also identified the need for educational services in Queensland to be more responsive to influences such as technological innovation, fluctuating labour markets and evolving education and training needs. To that end the Queensland Studies Authority will have the responsibility of developing syllabi for implementation in schools; to accredit syllabi developed elsewhere; to develop tests; to issue certificates and tertiary entrance statements; and to ensure collaboration and cooperation between state and non-state schooling sectors and between primary, secondary and tertiary education.

To provide the best possible education services for Queensland, the new authority will also be able to directly inform the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth on matters relating to vocational education and training. The minister may also relate matters to the authority. Together, the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and the Minister for Education may provide written directives to the Queensland Studies Authority. In keeping with our commitment to providing the best educational outcomes for students, the new authority will also have the ability to approve syllabi and preschool guidelines which have been developed by other bodies in Australia or the world. This bodes well for the future of our students, giving both state and non-state schools the opportunity to access high quality syllabi.

The new authority will have a membership carefully designed by key stakeholders which will include teachers, parents, industry and vocational education and training and tertiary representatives. Broader representation will be accessed through appropriate committee mechanisms, thus enabling the authority to seek comment from the whole community.

As I said at the outset, I am very pleased to support this bill and what it does for Queensland students. I guess the new authority first and foremost will be student oriented. It will help them move through their education from preschool to year 12 and beyond—a seamless and worry-free education where the curriculum is up to date and comprehensive and flows logically from preschool to year 12, where there are no problems for students who proceed from year 7 to year 8 or from year 10 to year 11. In other words, we are making 13 years of education flow for students in a seamless manner.

Another important issue regarding the new authority is one that the present Board of Senior Secondary School Studies should be congratulated for, that is, certification. BSSSS is world renowned for its assessment and certification process. Public confidence in assessment and the certificates issued is paramount. John Pitman and BSSSS are to be congratulated for

their work in this most important area. In my many discussions with John over many, many years about certification and assessments and the need to enlarge on the subjects that could be included on a certificate on the completion of secondary schooling, one thing became clear; that is, Board of Senior Secondary School Studies subjects are not the only subjects that should be recorded on such certification. I applaud John for his work over many years, and his continuing work, with respect to ensuring that subjects other than board subjects are being studied and included as part of a student's achievements on completion of secondary schooling.

If we are serious about ensuring that secondary schooling is for all students and not just the 30 per cent to 35 per cent who attend university post high school—and I believe we are and I believe that this Minister for Education and her parliamentary secretary are very serious about that—then we must ensure that there are subjects available to students that are appropriate and for which they receive a certificate on completion of those studies. There are many different pathways through the education maze. There has to be, and this has been recognised. The work done thus far by John, the board, our previous minister, Minister Wells, and the present minister has ensured this and will provide for more pathways.

The education system must adapt to the changing world around us. In order to get more students completing 12 years of education, we must change the system to suit the students whilst ensuring that the integrity of the assessment and certification process is not compromised and continues to be held in the high regard that it is at present. The integrity of this assessment process and its high standing is as a result of the professional and hardworking teachers in our schools who have continued to ensure that our school based assessment and moderation is the best in the world.

I was in the chamber yesterday when the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Jo-Ann Miller, thanked everyone involved in the consultation process for their input, which has resulted in the important change that this legislation provides. I also thank them and acknowledge the work done by Jo-Ann. I kept in touch with my colleagues during this consultation process and they told me that they were most impressed with her work.

Time expired.
