



Speech by

JAN JARRATT

MEMBER FOR WHITSUNDAY

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EDUCATION [QUEENSLAND STUDIES AUTHORITY] BILL

Ms JARRATT (Whitsunday—ALP) (12.15 p.m.): I rise in support of the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Bill 2001. I welcome the bill, which will see the three existing statutory bodies whose job it is to oversee curriculum development, assessment, certification and tertiary education procedures replaced by a single body, the Queensland Studies Authority.

During my 12 years as a teacher in the state education system the one constant was change. While many of my colleagues tended to resist change and were at times cynical about the new directions being taken within education, I know that if we are to keep abreast of the rapid pace of change that affects every facet of life then our education system must remain at the cutting edge of research and practice.

Our children are our future and we owe them nothing less than to be vigilant and innovative in curriculum development, delivery and assessment. In addition, we must recognise and value the diversity that exists within the student population and tailor both curriculum and post-secondary pathways in a way that not only allows but actually values multiple intelligences and aspirations. This bill goes a long way to achieving these ends.

The creation of a single authority that will have the capacity to create a clear vision and map out processes that eliminate the present overlap and inequity augurs well for students in our schools. The fact that the new authority will report to both the Minister for Education and the Minister for Employment and Training will surely facilitate a situation in which both tertiary and vocational pathways are valued on their merit. Although in my own life I chose a pathway through a tertiary education, I want to place on record my unqualified support for the development of vocational curricular. In doing so, this morning I will point to an exciting recent development that is unfolding in my electorate of Whitsunday.

I am sure that honourable members would be well aware that the Bowen-Whitsunday region is home to a huge seagoing fleet. There are in excess of 300 commercial vessels operating in the waters around Whitsunday as well as some 800 recreational vessels that are registered to local owners. While many exciting options exist in the area for people seeking a job in the maritime industry, in our region the missing element has always been a structured, coordinated training regime.

Proserpine State High School has always offered students marine studies courses. The local TAFE college has certificate courses and industry training is available, but none of this has been linked to produce a logical, sequential pathway for people of all ages looking to pursue a career in maritime or associated industry. This is about to change.

Thanks to the overwhelming community support and the tireless work of the Maritime Skills Centre steering committee, together with a whole-of-government working group, phase 1 of an exciting concept has been realised. The Minister for Employment and Training, the Honourable Matt Foley, was recently able to announce that Proserpine State High School had received nearly \$300,000 in funds through the Australian National Training Authority to establish the Queensland Maritime Academy at the high school. The money will be used to purchase resources such as a fully equipped eight-metre training vessel and software simulation programs that will soon allow the school to offer students certificate courses in marine operations. This training will mean that students completing the course will have post-school options of linking into TAFE accreditation courses, taking up further training within industry or entering the work force with established qualifications.

The establishment of the Queensland marine academy at Proserpine State High School is just the beginning of an exciting plan to see the Bowen-Whitsunday region established as a centre for maritime training in Australia. I understand that as the next step in the plan, the steering committee has submitted a request to the Minister for Education for placement of a teacher in the school who would be dedicated to the development and coordination of career pathways between the school, TAFE and industry.

I understand that the demands on the Education budget are numerous, but I urge the minister to give serious consideration to this proposal because, like the bill before the House today, the Queensland marine academy project promises to offer our students an alternative pathway to a quality education with flow-on effects that underpin the development of the Bowen-Whitsunday community.

I place on record my congratulations to all involved in getting the Queensland marine academy up and running. That includes the Deputy Mayor of the Whitsunday Shire Council, Tolma Cann; Beat Ritzmann; and the principal of Proserpine State High School, Chris Roth, who have put in many hours and who have been dedicated to seeing the project realised.

I have 21 schools in my electorate—all fine schools ranging from quite large secondary schools, P-12 schools, through to one-teacher schools with as few as eight or 10 students. I am very proud of what is happening in all of those schools. I will not use the time today to speak about them individually. I feel that perhaps the debate has probably covered most of the ground that it should at this stage. However, I want to place on record my absolute support for those schools and how proud I am of the programs that they are undertaking. I wish them well for the coming year. I am very pleased to support the bill.
