



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BUNDAMBA

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EDUCATION [QUEENSLAND STUDIES AUTHORITY] BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.49 p.m.): This bill marks the culmination of a journey that began in the 1980s. Since then there have been a number of initiatives to address curriculum development, assessment and certification and tertiary entrance procedures to ensure that we provide our students with the best possible support.

Currently in Queensland these functions are managed by three separate statutory authorities within the Education portfolio: the Queensland School Curriculum Council for years P-10, the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies for years 11 and 12, and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority for tertiary entrants. Each of these entities has separate legislation and each has provided excellent service to Queensland students, and this bill is not about changing what they did so well. This bill is providing for the future.

The combined effect of these three separate legislative regimes determines the conditions of learning in Queensland schools. Extensive review and analysis of future education has highlighted that there are anomalies in the current legislative regime. The current system for curriculum development, assessment, certification and tertiary entrance is complex, with the three authorities operating independently rather than collaboratively. There are overlapping roles and functions and different reporting and accountability responsibilities between the three authorities.

The separate responsibility for syllabus and assessment in years 1 to 10—the compulsory years of schooling—from the non-compulsory years of schooling does not support the development of consistent approaches to learning across the full 24 semesters of education, and this disconnection creates difficulties for students, particularly those at risk of not completing year 12. Further, it can be argued that the current legislative regime favours those students who seek to enter university or other tertiary institutions on completing year 12. This accounts for approximately 35 per cent of students of the age cohort. Operating separately, the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority have little scope for ensuring clarity of definition or effective articulation and coordination of the learning pathways and qualifications framework for the wide variety of post-school education, training and employment destinations of the majority of school leavers.

Under the previous Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells, a consultation process based on the green paper *Student Achievement in Queensland* was undertaken to address these issues. When I was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, the minister requested me to chair the process, meeting with all of the stakeholders and other interested parties and reporting directly to her. This stakeholder group included representatives from the existing authorities, parent groups, unions, government agencies, the independent, Catholic and state education sectors, indigenous education, higher education and industry. This has been my major undertaking in 2001 and, whilst time consuming, it has been enormously rewarding.

Out of the extensive consultation process several options emerged as possible models. These were reviewed by the broad reference group which, through me, provided advice to the minister. The minister, after careful consideration, made the decision that a single statutory authority was the most appropriate solution to meet the future needs of students in the state.

In coming to this decision, it was recognised that this was not about changing what the current authorities were doing well but building on their success and achievements and positioning education in Queensland for the future. In fact, the minister was anxious to ensure that for those students entering

years 11 and 12 this year there would be no disruption. As I have a daughter in year 12, I am particularly mindful of this issue.

Clause 54 makes provision to ensure that persons studying to receive a certificate will not be disadvantaged by any changes to the requirements for certificates. For example, a student may be studying for a senior certificate in year 11 and might be affected by a change in the requirements for the issue of the certificate. The authority must ensure that the year 11 student can continue the course of study towards the senior certificate as planned without being affected by the change.

Once the decision to progress to a single authority was made, an intensive process of consultation and development took place, with three separate working groups being formed. These groups were representative of the independent, Catholic and state schooling sectors, the unions and the current authorities working together to inform on the drafting of the legislation, policy issues and providing advice on the transitional arrangements. The chair of the legislation group was Mr Brian Rout of Education Queensland; the chair of the policy group was Mr Jim Tunstall, Director of the Queensland School Curriculum Council; and the chair of the transition group was Mr Bob McHugh, CEO of the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies. These groups also reported to the wider reference group on a regular basis and to the minister.

The bill before the House today was largely constructed out of this cooperative process, with each sector having substantial input and ownership of the words and an understanding of the effect of the proposed legislation. Draft legislation was put before the stakeholders, and I chaired an intensive process of general and individual briefings, the results of which were again conveyed to the reference group and to the minister. I put on record in this House that the spirit of cooperation and the willingness to think outside the constraints of sector boundaries characterised the working groups.

The Queensland Studies Authority seeks, through its objects, to help schools achieve quality learning outcomes for their students, to facilitate the transition of students through the sectors of education and, most importantly, to maintain public confidence in the certificates of achievement issued under the act. The principles for achieving these objects include, firstly, that collaboration and cooperation should be promoted across all sectors of education, that is, preschool, primary, secondary, special education and tertiary education as well as across state and non-state schools.

The second principle was that students should be encouraged to gain a certificate of achievement on completion of secondary education or an equivalent qualification issued in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework. The third principle was a recognition that there are many pathways that may lead to qualifications and certification, and that studying board subjects is simply not the only way. In OECD countries, such as Germany, a job seeker must have a schooling qualification to seek employment.

The fourth principle was that encouraging students to complete the non-compulsory years of schooling has a much wider effect by contributing to the social and human capital of the state and the nation. The fifth principle was that the professional role of teachers in schools be recognised. Our model of school based assessment is strongly based on an acknowledgment of the professionalism of teachers, and this principle aims to ensure that the authority has regard to and takes into account this role when developing syllabuses and determining procedures for assessment and moderation.

The sixth principle was that the diverse educational needs of students should be catered for. We recognise that one syllabus does not necessarily fit the needs of all students, and it is anticipated that the authority will develop syllabuses and preschool guidelines to meet the needs of students with special needs, such as students with disabilities and students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The final principle was that students should be helped to achieve their career goals. This will be done by making available information to assist students choose the pathway that suits their needs.

The guiding principles thus focus on our students, and our students are our state's future. Honourable members should note that, beyond the power to develop, revise and approve 1 to 12 syllabuses and guidelines, the authority will also develop and revise documents supporting the implementation of approved syllabuses and approved preschool guidelines. Most importantly, the authority will also develop resources and services for the professional development of teachers to support the implementation of approved syllabuses and preschool guidelines.

The legislation ensures that under the transitional provision in clause 87 all syllabuses and preschool guidelines currently recognised by the Queensland School Curriculum Council and syllabuses and study area specifications currently approved by the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies are taken to be approved under this act. Most importantly, the act provides for the authority to accredit syllabuses developed by entities outside the authority. This is a function that none of the current authorities has, and allows the QSA to review what is best practice throughout Australia and the world and, subject to the usual rigour, accredit it for use in Queensland schools.

A further area of outstanding cooperation and goodwill was the agreement by the sectors and the stakeholders around the composition of membership of the authority. Necessarily, with three

authorities being subsumed into one and each with its own board or council representative on the stakeholder group, downsizing to one authority was a sensitive issue. The working group suggested a fair model of equal state and non-state representation in the new authority.

As honourable members would be aware, the Minister for Education, in her second reading speech, made mention of the membership and referred to the authority accessing broader representation and advice through a relevant committee structure. The minister in particular said—

I expect the new authority to canvas the full range of parent views through appropriate committee mechanisms.

As chair of the reference group, I am aware of the enormous contribution by all stakeholders and the education sectors. From the Association of Independent Schools Queensland, I make mention of the CEO, Dr John Roulston, and Dr Barry Arnison; from the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Mr Joe McCorley and Mr Damien Brennan; and from Education Queensland, Mr Brian Rout and officers of the project team led by Mrs Donna George and the external consultant engaged to facilitate the process, Mr Kent Maddock.

The chairs and CEOs of the existing authorities, including Professor Colin Mackerras and Mr Jim Tunstall of the Queensland School Curriculum Council, Professor Diana Davis and Ms Bernadette Roberts of the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority, and Associate Professor Richard Fotheringham and Mr Bob McHugh of the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and their staff have made an enormous contribution to policy development, drafting of the legislation and the transition plans. The representatives of the parent bodies were Mr Garry Cislowski of the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens, Mr Paul Dickie of the Parents and Friends Federation, Mrs Patricia Waldby of the Independent Parents Federation Council of Queensland and Mr Jack Beach of the Isolated Children's Parents Association. I commend their dedication, commitment and professionalism in dealing with the relentless flow of paper and providing excellent input and comment at all stages of the development of this bill. In addition, the process was resourced by representatives of the education unions, the principals associations and other government agencies who ensured a high level of rigour was applied in the process of policy development and the drafting of the bill.

This legislation is yet another plank in the Beattie government's Smart State structure. This legislation is about creating the best possible circumstances in which education in Queensland can respond to the needs of all students. This legislation is about the government not resting on its laurels but looking to the future to provide the structure and process for an increasingly complex educational future. This legislation is about helping Queensland students to be the best that they possibly can be. This legislation is ultimately about all educational sectors and stakeholders caring enough about the future of our children and our children's children to get the best go in life through the educational system.

In conclusion, I thank the Minister for Education, the Hon. Anna Bligh, for giving me this rewarding legislative task. On behalf of the reference group, the educational sectors and the educational stakeholders, I commend the bill to the House.
