



Speech by

Lindy Nelson-Carr

MEMBER FOR MUNDINGBURRA

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EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Ms NELSON-CARR (Mundingburra—ALP) (4.24 p.m.): I, too, rise to support this bill, which will amend five acts dealing with the administration of education in Queensland. Both the member for Algeria and I have been very involved with the minister in making these changes and as they were debated. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the minister on not only the content of what was discussed but also on her manner, her approach and her amazing attention to detail. I find it absolutely gobsmackingly amazing that the member for Burnett could criticise the minister for her negotiating skills. The minister is actually a master negotiator. She is persuasive and strong, but she is very fair. So, thank you.

Consultations on this amendment bill will be taking place in Townsville tomorrow, Wednesday, and once again I congratulate the minister on ensuring that schools and the general public are briefed on this legislation. Education Queensland's Assistant Director of Curriculum, Debbie Best, will meet with the school principals in Townsville tomorrow afternoon and will hold community information sessions tomorrow night.

As a parent and a former teacher I have a real vested interest in wanting the very best educational outcomes for our students, the teachers and the community and I believe that these amendments will do exactly that. The population growth in Townsville and Thuringowa has passed the 155,000 mark. As such our schools are correspondingly requiring more staff numbers, resources and capital improvements to cope with increasing student numbers. State schools are doing a superb job in educating our children, but without private schools, which also do a wonderful job, there would be an impossible demand on our state system. Townsville is no exception in that regard.

Assistance to eligible non-state schools should be delivered by the state government, but it is important that the support given is properly reflective of the needs of the schools in question and of their financial situations through a more streamlined approach in data collection. I do not believe that there will be a new bureaucracy created by this move. I am very pleased that with the amendments come some changes to capital assistance to non-state schools being allocated according to need. While this occurs already the amendments will provide more clarity.

I have a great deal of sympathy for many of the Catholic schools who actually take on a lot of non-fee paying students and they have to foot the bill for that. Last week I visited Abergowrie Catholic College up near Ingham and I would really like to congratulate John Crowley, the principal, who took me through the school. I met the students, most of whom are indigenous and most of whom are boarders. Those white students who are there have usually not made it in the state system. They have been expelled, excluded, and so they end up here. This school just blew me away. It was fantastic in every way and they were making the most of a very, very tight budget. The staff love it, the students love it and they have incredible outcomes. I believe last year only one student who left the school does not have a job. It is a real credit to them. They turn around students. They turn around their behaviour, they turn around their attitude and they are just wonderful. I will be going back there for a speech day next Saturday.

At this point it is worthy of reflection, too, that in the hottest parts of Queensland where the Beattie government in the 2004-05 budget allocated \$17.6 million for school airconditioning through the Cooler Schools program, \$1.6 million of that amount was for non-government schools.

On the matter of criminal history checks for mature age students in state educational institutions with the exception of distance education and special schools, it is vital to protect a person's civil rights but so, too, is the need to protect younger people who may also be attending those classes. I welcome measures in this legislation designed to ensure that children will not be put at risk from persons who may be intent on causing them harm. I commend the bill to the House.