



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (5.01 pm): I rise to speak briefly to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2006. Much is said about what education in our state and, indeed, our nation should be. What forms part of our children's curriculum is often a subject of hot debate. We have noted that in the last few days.

Some say our children should be studying more logic grounding subjects like mathematics. Others say that they should be engaged in the visual and performing arts to encourage creative and out-of-the-box thinking and analysis, they should be learning a certain type of Australian history, they should be learning more than one religious teaching and, of increasing importance, they should be involved in vocational training to address the skills shortage in Australia.

If they want to enter the trades we need to provide avenues for that. If they want to go to university we need to provide avenues for that. We need to be not forcing our young people down one path or the other but merely equipping them with the ability to do whichever they please and equipping them with the thought processes to make that decision.

Irrespective of which side of politics we associate with, the need to find a healthy balance between what our nation needs our young people to be and what young people want themselves to be is an exercise we need to address collectively. As a result—and the shadow minister for education has already asserted the opposition's position—I have no issue with offering my support for this bill.

I note that this legislation has had wide consultation. I enjoyed the Queensland Catholic Education Commission function last night. I acknowledge the important part that it plays in educating our Queensland children. About 20 per cent of Queensland children go to Catholic schools. My three kids have been to the local Catholic school—St Vincent's on the Gold Coast. It is a great school.

I feel the bill does well in addressing the need to incorporate vocational subjects and recognise their worth in contributing to the overall education of a young Queenslanders. Currently, the existing Senior Certificate simply records a student's level of achievement, whether it be high or low, in recognised subjects. With these changes, a wider range of learning will be able to contribute to the new QCE, including new options of workplace learning projects, self-directed learning projects and university subjects. Literacy and numeracy standards must also be met.

I know that lots of members have spoken about the training that kids can do. Benowa State High School in my electorate certainly has a very active program where kids get to go and learn in the workplace. This program is for those who are not necessarily going to go on to more academic pursuits.

This is the educational balance that we need to be providing. Achievements such as participation and leadership in community or sporting programs or a student's research of topics of their own interest may count towards a senior qualification. This can only encourage young Queenslanders to get involved and spearhead their own development. We need to be planting the seed in our children for their desire to pursue lifelong learning to grow. They will have a range of attributes that they can offer future employers—core generic skills that can be employed in any future endeavour as well as specific skills or areas of interest that they have had the opportunity to focus on.

Students who are currently in grade 10 this year are the first group to begin studying towards the new certificate, which will be issued for the first time in 2008. The bill achieves these changes to the certification in Queensland by giving the authority the functions to issue the QCE and statement of results. The bill also extends the use of student accounts for the purposes of certification generally. It will enable the authority to obtain enrolment and results information for all students striving for a senior schooling certificate in Queensland whether or not they are in the compulsory participation phase.

The bill also changes the eligibility for membership to the Teachers Disciplinary Committee. I welcome that the bill will disqualify a person from becoming or continuing as a member of the committee if convicted of an indictable offence. The bill provides this through granting a specific power for the minister to seek from the commissioner of police a written report about a person's criminal history and a brief description of the circumstances of a conviction mentioned in the criminal history. I note that a request by the minister for the criminal history of a potential member requires the consent of the person. Therefore, a person who does not wish their history to be checked can opt out of the process. I think that is quite fair. These changes will have obvious benefits in the pursuit of keeping our young people safe, and I have no qualms with the scope of this new power.