



Speech by

**Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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## **EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL; EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (12.21 pm): I rise this afternoon to add my contribution to the cognate debate on the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 and the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009. Before I add my comments to the debate on the two bills, I would like to publicly recognise the shadow minister for education and training, the member for Moggill, for his work in this place over the last six months in holding the government accountable for the management of education and training services in this state.

The Education Legislation Amendment Bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Child Care Act 2000, the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 and the University of Queensland Act 1998. The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2009 also amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and it makes several minor amendments to another six acts.

Firstly, I welcome the amendment to the Child Care Act 2000, which provides parents with a greater choice with respect to child-care services offered throughout Queensland. This is about providing a choice of quality of service and also notification of a lack of consistent standards and record of noncompliance breaches issued in the past three years.

**Mr WATT:** Nothing like government reform.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I cannot agree with the member for Everton on that. I note that, while it is so important to maintain standards across-the-board, I have had some involvement with the child-care system as my wife is a family day care provider. I see the rules and regulations that have taken place over the years and sometimes I do wonder whether we are coating our children—the future of this country, the future of our state—in bubble wrap, protecting them from playing games that kids have played over hundreds of years, keeping them away from the germs that allow our body to build natural immune systems all for the sake of one's minority views. So at times I do feel for the child-care industry which, with respect to the issues that I have just raised, is forever tied up in red tape and bureaucracy rather than allowing kids just to be kids. It did not seem to do any harm to me.

**Mr Watt:** You're living proof!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I was not deliberately baiting. I certainly did not hang the carrot for the member for Everton. But I am not surprised that those opposite would not agree. I might say that, for those of us in the chamber, being raised as children when we were has not been so bad for us.

**Mr Watt:** Some of us.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Particularly on this side of the House. I note that in the second reading of the bill, the Minister for Education and Training announced that the Bligh government is committed to openness and transparency and believes it is vital that parents have access to crucial information about services such as schools and child-care centres. I thank the minister for this. It is unfortunate that the Bligh government does not extend this commitment of openness and accountability to the overall operation of government

and management of the state of Queensland. I welcome the other amendments in both bills we are debating in this cognate debate. Since both of the amendment bills being introduced by the government deal with some similar issues, I will speak about both of the amendment bills en bloc.

Firstly, the Indigenous pre-prep program offered in 35 communities throughout the state is designed to give Indigenous children a head start in developing literacy and numeracy skills. In introducing this program, the government failed to recognise a gap in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 when the compulsory preparatory year was introduced in January 2007. From the EGPA review of 2004-06, a discretionary provision to the act was recommended that would enable the delivery of programs and services to children below compulsory school age, other than the preparatory year. This was intended to assist those children previously identified as being at high risk of having some numeracy and/or literacy deficiencies compared with the standard expected of children commencing grade 1 at schools throughout Queensland. It has been recognised that some children do not have the support at an early age to metacognitively develop their speech and literacy skills, and this provision allows for all Queensland children entering grade 1 to be on as close to a level playing field as possible.

Secondly, the amendment provisions proposed to assist the Queensland College of Teachers with respect to the eligibility to teach gives the college greater flexibility and encourages more people with relevant industry experience to take up the teaching profession. The recent NAPLAN results were welcomed by the Minister for Education and Training. While they did improve, let us have a look at our report card, when comparing Queensland student's literacy and numeracy skills to students in other states in Australia. I concur with the shadow minister for education in saying that there was nothing encouraging about the results at all: year 3, seventh overall; year 5, seventh overall; year 7, fifth overall; and year 9, sixth overall.

When compared to the national average for 2009, Queensland also struggled. For each of the four year levels that the NAPLAN tests are administered, Queensland students are below the national average. Some people may say that this illustrates the need for a national curriculum. To that may I suggest that, before we go ahead and lose each of our states' individuality, teachers and schools are given more support and dedicate more time to teaching basic reading, writing and arithmetic. I can remember a time in primary school when this was the core to education and our training, when every morning we would recite the times table with a robotic tape in the background. This taught us to add up without the use of calculators. If we did not do it, we would have a piece of chalk thrown at us.

**Mr Watt:** That's the way, isn't it!

**Mr BLEIJIE:** I would certainly hate to think what would happen if a teacher wanted to administer some sort of discipline in the education system that we have these days.

**Ms Grace:** Not to mine.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** As I said in this place, it certainly did not do anything to me. It certainly engendered a sense of community spirit and respect for my teachers and principals. These days, with the education system that Labor has engendered into Queensland over the past 11 years, for a student to have a piece of chalk thrown at them or to be spoken to harshly or disciplined—I can recall red pens—we would have children with psychology reports, seeing psychiatrists. The point I make is that it never did any harm for a child to have respect for their teacher and to have discipline in our schools.

At a community meeting I recently attended, many of the constituents made mention of the lack of practical experience incorporated into university study and how this is often reflected in the competence of industry professionals right across-the-board—be they nurses, lawyers and teachers. I continually speak to students who have completed education study or are currently studying education. The students I have spoken with have made mention of the lack of practical skills offered as part of their university degree. There is a practical component, I would agree. However, all of the students have given me feedback that their courses severely lack the practical teaching measures and skills that would benefit them when they actually begin teaching students, the future generations of Queenslanders. I welcome the provision for the Queensland College of Teachers to tighten the standards which we impose on those wishing to register to teach in Queensland. We need to get the best here teaching, and if you pay peanuts you get monkeys.

I would like to mention and commend the government for the amendment to the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002. I welcome the ability for the international schools to be acknowledged by the department of education as 'recognised schools'. This will hopefully encourage schools like Mountain Creek State High School, which is on the border of my electorate and the member for Buderim's electorate, to offer an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program, which is a two-year pre-university program.

The diploma not only provides students with an enhanced academic focus but also provides a curriculum with an international perspective. The diploma suits highly motivated senior students and is designed to equip candidates with the skills and attitudes necessary for success in higher education and employment. In 2005 Mountain Creek State High School commenced the diploma as an alternative senior/pre-tertiary curriculum for years 11 and 12 students. This program has so far been highly successful and

has allowed Mountain Creek State High School to be recognised in the international community as a school of choice.

**Mr Watt:** A very good school.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Absolutely. The entire international program offered at Mountain Creek State High School is one that I would recommend all high school principals in Queensland look at. I take this opportunity to congratulate the principal, Mr Greg Peach, and his administration for the vision in implementing the program at Mountain Creek, which as I said is unfortunately just out of my electorate but on the border and I have many students in my electorate attending the school.

The Education and Training Legislation and Amendment Bill 2009 is supported by the opposition, and I welcome its introduction into the House. In the formation of the legislative amendment, extensive consultation was sought. This consultation included input from Queensland Catholic Education, the Creche and Kindergarten Association, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Association of State School Principals. I welcome this extensive consultation process. It is my belief that more community consultation should be sought during legislative reform. These are the people who will feel the effects of any legislative reform as they are at the coalface of education provision in this state.

As a husband of a family day care provider, I certainly understand and advocate for various child-care options being offered in our community and the transparency of these child-care institutions for the benefit of choice for parents. It is important for parents to see those child-care providers who are consistently noncompliant with state legislation and standards or who have been issued with a serious noncompliance breach. I believe that the approach outlined by the minister does strike a balance between ensuring services are viable and ensuring parents have easy access to important information about those entrusted with the care of our children.

I also concur with the minister and congratulate the Office for Early Childhood Education and Care for the high standards of child care maintained across the state. It is disappointing to have to say that this is the first real piece of positive education news we have seen from this government in terms of legislation since the election in March. First we had the teachers' pay dispute, which continues to linger as the government continually fails to negotiate with the Queensland Teachers Union. We have seen the escalation of bullying within our schools so that we now lead Australia, the lapse and constant watering down of school discipline and behaviour management policies, funding for new IT equipment tied up in red tape and bureaucracy, the overcrowding of many classes including our prep classes, P&C committees in some schools having to foot the bill for building maintenance, truancy rates which continue to rise, the neglect of regional school leavers in apprenticeship and cadet training programs, the exponential cost hike of child care, audits required to examine how school funding allocated is actually being spent just to name a few—

**Mr Watt** interjected.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** Member for Everton, you do not have to add to my list. I have a hefty list and I certainly do not need you to add to it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! All comments from both sides will be made through the chair.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** We lead the way in truancy and bullying but are last in terms of literacy and numeracy. What a sad indictment on Labor governments in this state over the last 11 years. It is no wonder teachers in Queensland are leaving in droves, having to work in those conditions. It is time this government put our children's future back at the top of the agenda and started to fix the education system in this state. I commend the bill to the House.