



Speech by

Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Thursday, 28 October 2010

EDUCATION AND TRAINING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr POWELL (Glass House—LNP) (8.59 pm): I, too, rise to contribute to the debate on the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 addresses several important but, as the member for Indooroopilly just highlighted, long overdue changes to education and child care. Firstly, I acknowledge that I am pleased to see the inclusion of autistic spectrum disorders in the definition of disabilities. Assisting the development of young children with autism spectrum disorders places significant stress on families, and it is my hope that the acknowledgement of this disorder will provide much needed support to these families. According to Autism Spectrum Australia, one in 160 Australians has an autistic spectrum disorder, emphasising the need for support for these children in our child-care system.

A child who has trouble communicating can face many difficulties when first beginning their schooling, and this acknowledgement of autistic spectrum disorders in the child-care sector will help provide a framework of support for the development of these children. Information collected from the child-care sector could provide important insight into planning and monitoring of outcomes of early childhood initiatives as well as ensuring that relevant services and approved kindergarten programs receive the appropriate funding. This kind of statistical information can be used to tailor kindergarten programs directly to students' needs.

Clearly, great minds think alike—or at least this legislation lends itself to the obvious—as my next comments echo those of my good colleague the member for Indooroopilly. Yet again the Bligh Labor government has used its powers of plagiarism to pilfer yet another LNP policy. Let me quote—

The school principal will have authority to speak on behalf of the school community and will be responsible for school discipline with the authority to make the decision, at a local level, to expel or suspend a student within the approved (school behaviour) code.

This next quote is from a slightly different source. It states—

The ability to make decisions about discipline within their school, including the exclusion of students, is key to confirming principals' authority to the school community and in driving improved student behaviour, school performance and increased principal accountability.

School principals will have the 'power to exclude a student enrolled at their school for a period of not more than one year or permanently'.

The similarity is blinding. To the untrained eye it would be very difficult to tell which quote came from the LNP's education revival to make Queensland top of the class again released prior to March last year and which quote came from the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill 2010 explanatory notes. Astonishing! Does the Bligh Labor government really think that it can continue to hoodwink the media and hoodwink Queensland voters into believing the LNP is a policy free zone? How can it honestly believe it can get away with that when for the third time this week we are debating legislation that mirrors LNP policy and private members' bills? First there was the carers bill, then the penalties and sentences bill and now the Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill. Let me thank the Bligh Labor government, because by presenting this bill to the House it has put paid to its own propaganda and spin once and for all that the LNP has no policies.

Before I conclude, I have not yet had an opportunity to acknowledge a success for the parents, students and staff at Elimbah State School. Back in June I raised in this House the concerns of the Elimbah school community that the government continued to deny them a safe pedestrian crossing on Beerburrum Road. The government's prevarication meant that young Grace Giampino was struck by a vehicle when crossing the road with her older brother. Fortunately, Grace was not seriously injured, but this incident was the last in a decade of incidents and rightly pushed the school to breaking point. Finally, after a decade of despair and a concerted campaign during the past six months, the school community can rejoice. We have succeeded in getting not only a new and improved physical crossing, but also a funded crossing supervisor.

As I conclude, I thank Sharon Webb, the tireless P&C president and her band of passionate mums and dads. I would like to thank Grace Giampino and her family. I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts and financial contribution made by Councillor Adrian Raedel and the Moreton Bay Regional Council and also the staff at the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

I received the following email from Grace's father, John. It states—

My name is John Giampino and I am the father of Grace ... who was knocked down at a pedestrian crossing near Elimbah state school on 10 June 2010. I, as a current serving member within the defence force would like to thank you and your staff for fighting to get funding to have a guard positioned at that particular crossing. I believe that my daughter's life is worth a lot more than the \$15,000. As a serving member I am proud to serve and protect this fine country of ours, I thank you for your service and for protecting my daughter and other children and averting a catastrophe. Thankyou.

In conclusion, all I can say is that I am relieved that finally common sense has prevailed and Elimbah students can now cross this busy road with greater certainty that they will stay safe.