



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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CHILD CARE AND ANOTHER ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (3.41 pm): I am proud of the Bligh government's approach to education and its drive to improve results among our students. Specialised coaches and additional teachers in the areas of literacy, numeracy and science are a key step in ensuring our kids get a flying start in life. Next week, the community cabinet comes to Far North Queensland and, as part of the visit, I will have great pleasure in joining the Premier and education minister to officially open Innisfail State College. The new educational precinct is a \$36.7 million investment in the local community. It will be the most modern education facility outside of Brisbane and will do amazing things to enhance employment and training opportunities for students. This is a learning opportunity that does not exist anywhere else in the state. It is just one of a range of education reforms that we are undertaking and it demonstrates this government's commitment to providing our students with the support they need to achieve success at school and beyond.

Early childhood education and care is a priority for the Bligh government to help our youngest Queenslanders fulfil their potential. The Child Care and Another Act Amendment Bill 2010 incorporates three important amendments for the provision of high-quality early childhood services in Queensland. Firstly, it will ensure that child-care services are required to maintain a logbook of their compliance history. This logbook will assist parents in obtaining valuable information about licensed early childhood education and care centres that have previously failed to comply with the Child Care Act 2002.

Secondly, the bill will further amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act to enable the college to develop and administer preregistration testing of aspiring teachers. As we are all aware, the implementation of this testing was a recommendation of the Masters review. This is another example of the Bligh government coming through with an election commitment to improve school performance.

Thirdly, the bill will amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 to enable the recognition of certain teaching experiences for the purpose of renewing teacher registration. This is a step in the right direction in recognising the invaluable contribution made by teachers working in non-school environments like kindergartens.

I welcome the announcement in December last year that this year Mulgrave would benefit from new kindergarten services as part of the Bligh government's pilot program. The ABC Learning Centre at Tamarind Gardens will be among the first group of long-day-care centres to be subsidised to offer kindergarten programs taught by qualified teachers as part of the government's commitment to universal access. Having a kindergarten program combined with the convenience of long day care will be great for working parents who want their children to access quality early education. The Tamarind Gardens ABC Learning Centre is located in the fast-growing southern corridor of Cairns and I know the extra services will be welcomed by parents in our area. I also know that, as population growth will continue strongly, growth will fuel demand for early childhood education and child-care services.

As a father, the implementation of a logbook system for child-care centres is an initiative that is of particular importance to me. My wife and I can count ourselves among the vast number of families across Far North Queensland and the rest of Queensland that have two parents who work. This arrangement is

common, as more families than ever are entrusting their pre-prep-age children to day-care centres and kindergartens during the working week. This year my son, Tristan, started day care in Gordonvale. Last week he picked up his first day-care cold and, as other parents would know, this meant that his mum also had her first day-care cold. He also received his first 'love bite' from another child. Each morning when I drop him at the centre, like other parents I expect that Tristan will be safe and will receive high-quality care. I am very fortunate that the centre he attends has wonderful staff who clearly have a genuine interest in the welfare of my son.

The amendments in this bill provide for the introduction of logbooks in child-care centres. This means that, as a parent, I will have the ability to visit Tristan's centre and be made aware of any issues of noncompliance that the centre may have experienced. This measure offers peace of mind and ensures an open and honest relationship between service providers and parents. It also means that the community will be able to access information about whether a child-care centre is complying with minimum legislated standards.

There are many dedicated child-care workers at many good and reputable child-care centres in the electorate of Mulgrave that I represent. The owners and managers of those centres understand that the logbooks will be beneficial to their child-care centre. Because they do provide a high-quality service, their logbook will contain minimal entries of noncompliance. In this regard, the logbook serves as an incentive to maintain a high-quality service, because members of the community will be able to access information about any breaches.

As a parent, I know that this information will be invaluable when making a decision about which child-care provider to use. Ensuring that the centre that cares for a child is providing a high-quality service that meets legislated standards would play a significant role in any parent's decision making, including mine. It is also anticipated that the logbook system will provide greater accountability in the child-care industry and will, therefore, encourage the sector to continually strive to improve. Knowing that the community will have access to the logbooks of each and every child-care provider in an area and that parents may choose between providers based on that information will motivate service providers to ensure they are consistently compliant with legislated standards. The Bligh government makes no apology for this. This improvement will increase the level of confidence that those accessing child-care centres have in those services.

The two groups within the child-care industry that will be required to keep a logbook are licensed centre based services, such as kindergartens, and family day care services. Once information has been listed in the logbook, it is required to stay in the book for as long as the licensee holds a licence for that service. It is important to note that the department will work alongside the child-care sector to ensure that minimum standards are being met without compliance notices necessarily having to be issued.

The introduction of logbooks will be advantageous to both sides of the relationship—between child-care centres and those accessing their services. For parents and the local community it provides easily accessible and accurate information about the performance of a particular centre in relation to its compliance with legislation. This creates greater confidence and comparability for parents and guardians around the service they are accessing. In addition, the need to provide this information to the community is expected to drive improvements in the child-care sector. This level of accountability to the community will ensure that service providers consistently strive to provide a high-quality service.

As I said earlier, I am proud of this government's approach to early education and child care. We are driving reforms to meet the high expectations that parents quite rightly have. They want their children to receive the best education in Australia in a safe and secure environment. That is what we intend to deliver. It is my view that the amendments in this bill will be of great benefit to both the people of Queensland and the child-care sector generally. I commend the bill to the House.