



Speech by


**Hon. Cameron Dick**

**MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES**

Hansard Wednesday, 16 November 2011

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

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (9.50 pm), in reply: I thank all of the members who participated in this debate and for their positive contributions to this bill. Of all the legislation that I have seen go through this House, this is probably one of the bills that has received the most significant amount of bipartisan support and I think that is because of the importance and the significance of the legislation, as it is focused principally around protecting children in schools.

This has been a very thoughtful debate and I want to thank all members for their contributions. In particular, I thank the member for Toowoomba North, who is the chair of the relevant committee, and the members for Woodridge and Townsville for their addresses tonight. I also thank the members for Moggill, Buderim, Gladstone, Currumbin and Kawana for their support of the bill.

As I said, this is an important piece of legislation. Through this bill, the Queensland government is taking steps to enhance the protection of Queensland students and to uphold the high standards of Queensland's teaching profession. The bill aims to provide Queensland parents and the community with the confidence that all possible action will be taken to keep our children safe from sexual abuse. As a society, we have to set the bar high when it comes to our children. The government has moved to boost the level of protection because our children deserve nothing less.

The member for Moggill raised the issue of university land use. It is one of the issues in the bill and he asked a specific question about that. The bill extends the time that universities can actually lease land and clarifies the purposes for which the land can be used. The current legislation restricts a lease period to 25 years and the bill extends it to up to 100 years, providing commercial certainty. The universities, however, will still be required to use the land for educational purposes. The bill does not allow a university to build a commercial enterprise, like a hotel, on its land.

The member for Kawana raised the issue of the impact of the bill on QCAT. The initial advice is that, in relation to that part of the bill that will require teachers to reapply for registration, we think there are only seven teachers concerned and the impact on QCAT would therefore be minimal. The member for Buderim spoke of an example relating to a non-state school use, and that highlights the need for these new laws. The nonreporting in that instance, relied on by the member for Buderim, was one of the reasons the government took action to strengthen the reporting of sexual abuse. I had a little bit of difficulty understanding the other points the member for Buderim was trying to make.

The member for Currumbin raised a concern about the difficulty for non-professional staff or non-teaching staff in schools to comply with the reporting requirements. The existing reporting requirements under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 apply to all school staff. This is necessary as the genesis of the provisions was to protect students against the cover-up of sexual abuse within schools. In the interests of child safety, the bill applies the expanded provisions to all school staff as well. It is important that all school staff remain vigilant in protecting children from harm caused by sexual abuse, and the government does not consider the reporting obligations to be an onerous burden. All state school staff, including non-professional staff, undertake student protection training. We will continue to support staff—

as we do with all employees in the department—and ensure they are trained and supported and ensure they understand the law and their responsibilities under the law.

We do have the toughest laws relating to teacher registration in the country, and those laws are being strengthened to require the reporting of sexual abuse and suspected sexual abuse. I make no apologies for seeking to protect children in our schools. I am supported by my government colleagues and, it would appear, all members tonight in this move to strengthen that strong position we take in Queensland. I thank all honourable members for their contributions and for their support. I also thank departmental staff involved in the preparation of the bill. This has been a complicated bill in some ways to draft, and I thank the departmental staff for their diligence, including Stuart Busby, Amanda Dulvarie, Brett O'Connor, Chris Roney and Kateena Ryan, and for their work on the preparation of the bill. I thank a ministerial adviser in my office, Erin Fentiman, who has worked very thoroughly and diligently on this bill over many months.