



Speech by


**Jarrod Bleijie**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (8.37 pm): Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek your indulgence to wish my daughter, who is in the strangers' dining room tonight, a happy 6th birthday. Unfortunately, she is feasting on dessert and did not want to come in to listen to dad speak.

**Dr Flegg:** You can't blame her for that.

**Mr Dick:** She is obviously her mother's daughter.

**Mr BLEIJIE:** But her eight-year-old sister did and is in the public gallery. I welcome them to Parliament House.

The Education and Training Legislation Amendment Bill primarily deals with the safety, wellbeing and overall protection of Queensland students. The bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 and other acts for specific purposes. The bill will extend the mandatory reporting requirements of sexual abuse to include where a staff member becomes aware or reasonably suspects a student is being sexually abused by any person and promote timely reporting of any such incidents to the Queensland Police Service.

There is also an amendment to ensure the automatic cancellation of a teacher's registration or permission to teach where a person is convicted of a serious offence irrespective of the sentencing of imprisonment. I note the committee has recommended the bill be passed subject to some key amendments recommended and consideration and clarification by the minister of the points noted under section 1.2 of the committee report.

The shadow minister for education highlighted the agreement that the LNP has with recommendation 2 of that report and, indeed, the member for Moggill commented earlier on the greater definition that needed to be included. I take the minister's interjection to the honourable shadow minister before in relation to amendments that he has or will be putting before the House later tonight. That is good news. It is good news with the committee process that we have that these committees have these opportunities in an upfront manner to put forward recommendations to ministers. It is good to see the honourable minister taking on board some of those recommendations, and I thank him for that.

The bill was not referred to the legal affairs committee, but I note that the committee did seek feedback from the legal affairs committee in terms of some of the issues, particularly with respect to the automatic cancellation of a teacher's registration. That is how committees can work together, as was the case here. At the end of the day, with the amendments that the honourable Minister for Education will hopefully be moving, we will end up with better legislation. As I indicated, the amendments in terms of definition will be well received.

It is appropriate that the Queensland Police Service investigate any matters where an allegation of sexual abuse of a Queensland student is reported. The mandatory reporting requirements contained in the bill are important in that a determined cause of action should be at the behest of the QPS, rather than the administration of an individual school administration. This will remove any possibility or suggestion of improper intraschool investigation of such matters, as the QPS will be an unbiased third party in dealing

with these important matters. Given the importance of the issues in question, the investigatory process must be rigid and transparent, as is the underlying intent of the bill. Under these provisions, staff will be afforded indemnity from liability when making reports to the police of allegations of sexual abuse or a risk of sexual abuse where the perpetrator is not employed at the school, whereas they currently are not.

I note that a major review of teacher registration in Queensland has not taken place for some 17 years. New South Wales, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Victoria all established mandatory regulatory systems for teacher registration between 2001 and 2004. A review of Queensland's teacher registration process is well overdue and certainly welcomed.

I also note that there are provisions in the bill in relation to QCAT, the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The underlying intention of creating QCAT was to combine 18 tribunals and 23 jurisdictions into one tribunal. The former Attorney-General and current Minister for Education would know all about QCAT. He said at the time—

The establishment of QCAT will provide Queenslanders with access to civil and administrative justice through a single gateway. Queenslanders will no longer have to negotiate the maze of administrative review bodies, tribunals and courts in order to identify where to seek redress.

We supported it at the time, but I have raised publicly my concern at the case load of QCAT. In the annual report that was tabled a couple of weeks ago by the president of QCAT, Justice Wilson indicated that there are some issues and that if the underresourcing of QCAT continues some of the mediation matters will have to extend out, which is not what we want. I do not think it is what the government wants; I certainly know it is not what the former Attorney and current education minister wants.

In terms of the cancellation of the teacher registration and the added jurisdiction of QCAT, I just want to make sure, through the education minister, what potential changes are likely in terms of the increase of the case load on QCAT and the further resources that have been allocated to the administration of QCAT. It is not saying that there are not, because I know in the explanatory notes the honourable Minister for Education set out the case that QCAT directly brought this to the government's attention—*MacNeil v Queensland College of Teachers* [(2011) QCAT 260]. It is not that QCAT will be given this extra jurisdiction for any purpose. It is something that QCAT certainly said they did not have the jurisdiction to deal with. I am seeking from the education minister how he suspects the QCAT case load to increase and whether the resources and administration of QCAT are being reviewed.

Just before finishing my contribution tonight and while on the topic of education, I want to say that we have some great schools in Queensland and we have great kids at our schools. The intention of the bill is to keep our kids safe and protected, and that should be the intention of everyone. On that note, I seek your indulgence, Mr Deputy Speaker, to mention that the Kawana Waters State College had a mock parliament last week. In that mock parliament, they debated some bills—just as we are debating bills tonight—and they passed a bill to ban homework, with the votes being 20 to one; there was one student who voted against that bill. They also debated a bill that would mandatorily require parents to not only drop their students off at school but drop them right at the door of their classroom. These were year 6 students at Kawana Waters State College. It is great that our kids are participating in a democratic process. As we debate bills here tonight that impact on their future and our schools, they too are starting the process of debating issues that at the time they think are quite important to them.

I finish by thanking the shadow minister for his contribution tonight. I thank the education minister for the amendments he has foreshadowed, which certainly do support the member for Moggill's contribution tonight. I look forward to the minister's clarification on the points that will be raised in the debate tonight.