




Speech By  
**Annastacia Palaszczuk**

**MEMBER FOR INALA**

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**EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (3.45 pm): Can I state at the outset that the opposition will be supporting this bill. It is very practical in nature. I also want to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to the committee in relation to their recommendations. I have listened to what the minister has said in response to the recommendations. From the opposition's point of view, we are quite comfortable with what he has proposed. I do acknowledge that he has taken on board the committee's proposal in relation to providing a fact sheet that will provide assistance, especially to those overseas students coming from different countries to ensure that it is in their language. I thank the minister for that.

In relation to this bill there are perhaps three key components, the first of which is supporting the implementation of the move of year 7 to secondary school from 2015. Members of this House, especially those new members, might not be aware that this was an initiative under the former Labor government. It is good to see that the government has endorsed this proposal and is following through on it. It is the right thing to do. In relation to moving year 7 into secondary school, it is good to see that we actually have bipartisan support in relation to this matter. It is needed.

This is an initiative that the former government spent a lot of time considering all aspects of. We do know that initially there were some concerns from parents, but now we have prep coming into our primary school system, and I think the participation rate for children enrolled in prep is around 97 per cent. My niece is currently at prep, and the development that has taken place in the first eight months means that she is just so much more ready to go into year 1 next year. I think having that prep component in our schools is great for our young children. It gives them great opportunities, and I think that all members can be proud that we are actually making reforms in education that are being felt right across the state and are wholeheartedly benefiting our young children. In the future, as a result of this extra year of schooling, our children will be suited for a different type of Queensland—a Queensland that will need young minds which are ready for innovation and ready to take up challenges. I think many members here could even go back to their days of schooling when we did not even have computers in primary school. To now see prep students utilising iPads is something that I did not think I would see in my lifetime. But perhaps we will see a much more computer-literate generation as we move with the advances that are happening in our state and which will make Queensland much better.

In relation to the third aspect, which is international students, I might just make a few comments here, if I may. The bill also will allow the Director-General of the department to cancel the enrolment of international students for the nonpayment of fees. A student who is not an Australian citizen, or a permanent resident or a child of an Australian citizen or permanent resident is required to pay fees for state school education. If a family is in financial hardship, a payment plan can be entered into or fees may be exempted or waived. I agree with the Education and Innovation Committee that, excluding those children listed in the explanatory notes, it is appropriate that international students be required to pay fees for a state education. Parents are made aware of their obligation to pay fees when they

apply for visas to enter Australia, and they must show evidence of their capacity to pay before a visa is granted. This condition is established under Commonwealth law.

It is noted that there are safeguards in place to ensure that these provisions cancelling a child's enrolment are used as a last resort. These safeguards include warning parents or carers before any enrolment is cancelled, the option of entering into a payment plan and retaining the power to exempt a person from having to pay fees under certain circumstances.

This bill before us is straightforward, but in my closing comments I cannot escape the fact today that the minister said in question time that if he approves a briefing note, it is not really an approval. I have very grave concerns about this. As the education minister of this state responsible for a large budget, when you are a minister of the Crown you have to be fully aware of what you are signing. If you approve something, and you circle it, and you sign it, and you have more than—

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You have more than enough opportunity—

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please resume your seat.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:**—to present those other briefing notes.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Leader of the Opposition, please do not ignore my instructions. I call the minister with a point of order.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** The Leader of the Opposition has every opportunity to ask me about that tomorrow—and the misrepresentation that we heard from them today in question time. This has nothing to do with this bill.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** I am going to ask the Leader of the Opposition to return to the bill.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The briefing note in question related to education and my comments were broad in that the minister would sign off a number of briefing notes—in relation to moving year 7 into high school, in relation to prep, in relation to asset disposal or in relation to overseas students studying here. So the minister has the opportunity to sign off on briefing notes on a broad number of topics. An approval is an approval.

They are the clear points I wanted to make to the minister. In relation to the specifics of the bill, the opposition will be supporting this bill wholeheartedly.