




Speech By
Hon. John-Paul Langbroek
MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (5.48 pm), in reply: I thank all members for their contributions in the debate this afternoon. I especially want to thank members of the Education and Innovation Committee for their contributions. They have all acknowledged the chair of the Education and Innovation Committee, the member for Burdekin. I want to thank all of those committee members who made such considered contributions.

Of course, this is a very important change that the government has agreed to bring in. It was originally proposed by the Labor government in 2010. We have committed to year 7 becoming the first year of secondary education from 1 January 2015. This is a case of us having a look at a policy and being satisfied that it was and is a good thing. We do not just say no for the sake of saying no. We consider these things on a case-by-case basis and when we reject something we have a good reason for it. We do not reject it simply because the other mob put it in. I think that is an important acknowledgement that the opposition could learn from.

In fact, I want to begin by acknowledging an interjection that the member for Woodridge just made, suggesting that when national partnerships finish that is going to be an issue affecting our funding. I should make the point, as the member for Hervey Bay just did, that we have increased education funding in this state in the last budget by over 6.5 per cent. But in relation to issues to do with national partnerships, which are arrangements between the state and the federal government, the funding that Tony Abbott and Christopher Pyne as the shadow minister have agreed to is the exact funding that the Labor Party has proposed for the next four years. So in terms of the election on 7 September, there is no debate about whether someone is going to be funding something that someone else is not going to be. They have committed to the funding in the four years that are covered by the budget from the alternative government. So we welcome that commitment.

We are also disappointed, as I noted that the member for Toowoomba North mentioned, that Kevin Rudd was not prepared to offer the same deal when it came to future funding for education that he was prepared to offer Victoria. And has he not been a major let-down! We have seen Kevin Rudd, in his second iteration as Prime Minister, hair flicking and everything across all different sorts of issues.

Mr Bleijie: Twenty-six times.

Mr LANGBROEK: Flicking his hair 26 times. If it is a bit windy, he is more preoccupied with his own appearance than with getting things done for the people who he supposedly represents, including the people of Queensland. I notice that a couple of weeks ago Peter Beattie, in the week before he became a candidate, was quick to say that he thought that Kevin Rudd would win this election and that Queenslanders would vote for him because he is a Queenslanders. We await the result on 7 September with interest, because I have my doubts. Of course, there is still a long way to go until 7 September, but the signs are not promising, especially from a campaign that is all over the shop. In just over half an hour there will be a very interesting debate at the Broncos Leagues Club

between the Prime Minister and the opposition leader. We will see then who can answer the questions best, who can interact in a genuine and grown-up way with the people who they seek to represent and whether we will see a new way from the Prime Minister or whether we are just going to see a continuation of the old ways that, unfortunately, we have seen from him throughout this campaign over the past few weeks.

I have noted many of the contributions from those opposite. I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for her support for this bill. Over the past couple of years we have had year 7 being piloted through 20 schools. There is one that will be trialled in Gordonvale, in the electorate of the Manager of the Opposition Business, in 2014.

Mr Pitt: Looking forward to it.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, we are all looking forward to that, just as I know have many of the schools that I have been to that I will probably come to a little bit later. Honourable members would be aware that I have enjoyed listing schools in the parliament this week. This is a very positive announcement that we have been able to make over the past couple of years. Murrumba State Secondary College and Southport State High School have had trials of year 7 in high school. We have seen a very positive engagement of that trial at those schools. A number of other schools have conducted trials, such as Cleveland District State High School, the Gap State High School in the Premier's electorate, Varsity College on the Gold Coast and Pimpama State Secondary College, which is one of the schools that I was proud to open earlier this year. There are others as well that I will come to later. We have almost 2,300 year 7 students enrolled. It is important that we support the transition of year 7 into secondary school with the provision of infrastructure, human resources, IT services and professional development. It is those experiences gained from those trials that are informing the state-wide approach for the implementation of year 7 in secondary school in 2015. The governing bodies of non-state schools have been planning for this transition for several years. The bill supports the transition of non-state schools by providing streamlined processes for them to change their accreditation status.

People ask why we are doing it. We had some people sitting at the back of this place asking in their own way—and I will come to their contributions later—why we are doing it. It is because it will place early adolescent students in the best possible situation for their educational progression and achievement. We have an increasingly mobile Australian population. I am sure that many parents are not aware that, under our Constitution, the states are responsible for education. That has been an impediment to parents, who are increasingly mobile, understanding why they would suffer the frustrations of being told over the years that their children, having moved from one jurisdiction to another, would not necessarily be in the same grade or progressing to the next class because of the differences between jurisdictions. So although over the years we have managed to progress issues such as the Australian Curriculum, year 7 as it currently exists has not been able to receive aspects of that curriculum as well as they would be delivered if year 7 were in high school. We will have students having access to specialist teachers and facilities, especially in areas such as science, languages and music, that will offer age-appropriate academic challenges. So this move of year 7 into secondary school will align Queensland students with their interstate peers and it will position students to maximise the benefits of the Australian Curriculum.

By 2015, the majority of year 7 students in Queensland will be in their eighth year of school. It is a time that most students in Australia commence secondary school. With year 7 in the secondary school environment, Queensland students will have access to specialist teachers and facilities to support their success with the new Australian Curriculum. It will provide them with the variety, the intellectual challenge and the age-appropriate support that adolescents need during this important life phase. That is what I have seen as I have travelled to the trial schools: good social interaction, carefully monitored by their teachers and the leaders of their schools, pointing out to me that the year 8s have welcomed the year 7s into their schools. Murrumba State Secondary College and Pimpama State Secondary College are two schools that have opened with that cohort.

For those who have questions about what happens to the year 7 teachers after the move, this is an issue that has received some publicity over the past week. I want to point out that we are going to need approximately 1,300 additional teachers in state secondary schools when year 7 transitions. My department has undertaken significant workforce planning and has developed a range of strategies for staff in both primary and secondary schools. Up to 500 junior secondary school scholarships will be made available for primary school teachers transitioning to secondary school. Teachers in junior secondary schools will be supported through a suite of professional development activities. The usual retirement rates for primary teachers, more targeted recruitment of graduates ahead of the transition and encouraging a greater supply of secondary teaching graduates will ensure that the increased demand is met. I want to reassure those who are studying teaching that we think

that there will be the greatest recruitment since the prep year came into being in Queensland a few years ago.

We have provided significant financial support for both the state and the non-state sector. This transition is costing over \$600 million altogether when you take in capital cost and recurrent costs. We have committed a total of \$110 million to the non-state sector in the three financial years from 2012-13 to 2014-15 for capital programs. As honourable members have mentioned, the bill introduces streamlined processes for non-state schools to change their accreditation arrangements and government funding eligibility to offer year 7 in secondary education from 1 January 2015. I have asked the accreditation board to communicate with the non-state school sector to inform them about the proposed processes. To give some more clarity, it is expected that all non-state schools accredited for both primary and secondary education will offer year 7 as secondary education.

There are over 170 schools in this category. It is anticipated that all stand-alone non-state secondary schools accredited for secondary education and currently offering year 8 will seek to offer year 7 as secondary education. There are almost 80 of these schools. It is expected that some of the almost 230 stand-alone non-state primary schools may seek to extend their school's offering into secondary education. These are strategic decisions, of course, to be informed by local school board and council deliberations and non-state school accreditation processes. The financial and other support provided by government and the streamlined processes in the bill will assist schools to put into place appropriate arrangements to suit their particular school communities.

When we come to the issue of communication with school communities, as I have already mentioned the bill was originally released for community consultation in 2010. It has been in the planning for several years. One of the first questions I asked my department when I became the minister just on a year and a half ago was whether we would be ready. There was an evaluation process that has been undertaken during this school year, the 2013 school year, and the experiences of the pilot schools will inform best practice models and shape the individual school approaches to the transition of year 7 into a secondary setting, including such issues as infrastructure and facilities, human resources, IT, student transition programs and the implementation of junior secondary.

The state sector will continue its work to make sure that all schools are ready by 2015. Non-state schools have been planning this for several years. I have asked the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board to inform the non-state sector about those streamlined processes to assist their schools to implement the move of year 7 to secondary education. The community will continue to be informed about these changes through their local schools and other mechanisms in the lead-up to 2015. I will not go through those streamlined processes. It is important to note that we could not just change the accreditation status of all non-state secondary schools to include year 7 because not all of them will necessarily want to provide year 7 as secondary education. It is a streamlined process and a practical process where they inform the accreditation board of the attributes of accreditation that will apply to year 7, including the educational program for the year level and the site at which year 7 will be offered.

I have already mentioned the schools where we are having the pilot. They are in all the different regions. In fact, I will go through them: Alexandra Hills State High School, Bray Park State High School, Bremer State High School, Cleveland District State High School, Clifton State High School.

Mr Crisafulli interjected.

Mr LANGBROEK: No time restrictions today, can I say to the honourable Minister for Local Government. Crow's Nest State School, Glenden State School, Glenmore State High School, Mackay Northern Beaches State High School—another school that I was proud to open this year when we were there during the Queensland Plan—Meridan State College, Murrumba State Secondary College, Nambour State High School, Northern Beaches State High School, Pimpama State Secondary College, Southport State High School, Springfield Central State High School, The Gap State High School, Toolooa State High School and Varsity College. I have mentioned the cost. I said that it is being supported by capital investment of \$328.2 million in state secondary schools over four years from 2011-12 with an additional \$293.8 million in recurrent funding.

I will now turn to an issue that was of significant interest to members at the back and that is students in rural and remote communities. I will not be accepting the amendment put forward by the member for Mount Isa, who I note did not actually make a contribution to the debate on the bill. I look forward to his contribution in the consideration of the clauses. We did have a contribution from the member for Dalrymple who, of course, showed what we have come to expect from the member for Dalrymple and from members of the Katter's Australian Party—all care and no responsibility.

A government member: He is good on grade 7.

Mr LANGBROEK: That is right. I take that interjection. He is very good on year 7, but not much beyond that. They come in here and say anything they like. I want to reflect on that part of the contribution that was about Stuart State School, which I note is not in the honourable member's electorate anyway, and the complete misrepresentation that we have made a decision about that. I have been very clear about that. I am sure honourable members would agree. You just cannot say anything you like in debate. It is irresponsible to do that. I again say that it is not good enough to stand up in here as a member and suggest something that is not true and be allowed to get away with it. It just shows that the members of Katter's Australian Party are not fit to be anywhere near executive government. We are the party of regional Queensland. I well remember on election night 2012 when I was on a radio panel and the leader of Katter's Australian Party, the member for Mount Isa's father, came in and told us that it had been a great triumph. He is already pre-empting the results for 7 September. As I pointed out to him, they came in with two and they ended up with two. Of course, they then had someone else who joined them. What a great result. I am confident we are going to see exactly the same thing on 7 September. I say to the people of North and North-West Queensland that a vote for Katter's Australian Party on 7 September is a vote for the Labor Party.

Those members opposite should be considering issues in relation to students in rural and remote communities. The member for Mount Isa has written to me and I will happily address his issues when we come to the amendments. There is nothing that typifies the shallow nature of those opposite more than the Katter's Australian Party website. Whilst I do not want to encourage too much activity on their website, the first question asked on that website is, 'Do you want something more than spin?' The answer, of course, is, 'Yes, we would like something more than spin', but when you go to the policy section there is nothing about health and there is nothing about education. There is all this stuff about Coles and Woolworths, all the stuff that the man in the hat is always espousing, but nothing about health and nothing about education on the website of Katter's Australian Party. It just shows the all care and no responsibility attitude that we see from those opposite. We do want to support students in rural and remote communities. I am happy to deal with the issues they have raised. The member for Mount Isa has asked me about this in the House. He has mentioned a number of schools these students attend. I will deal with that when the amendment is raised in consideration in detail. As I say, it is particularly disappointing that the member wants to make an amendment but does not make a contribution in the general part of the bill in relation to that amendment.

The issue of tuition fees for students who are not Australian citizens was raised. Currently about \$1.5 million in tuition fees owed by families of dependent students is outstanding. The bill does enable the director-general to cancel the enrolment of an international student if the student or their parents do not pay the required tuition fees. It primarily targets the families of dependent students. There are students who reside in Australia temporarily to take advantage of vocational education opportunities who have not always paid the fees. I have had representations from some of those students themselves who have mentioned to me their difficulties in paying those fees. The fees that are charged are very clear and upfront. They are consistent with fees charged in other states such as New South Wales and Victoria. We will make sure that we are prepared as a department to adopt flexible arrangements to support families who are experiencing financial hardship, including refugee families and asylum seekers. The tuition fee charging practice varies depending on the immigration status of the child and their parent. For example, under current practices refugee families are not charged for state education. Children of asylum seekers in community detention are financially supported by the Australian government and my department manages the funding.

As I said, the Australian Curriculum is bringing new challenges to year 7 learning. Placing year 7 in a secondary school environment helps to better position Queensland students to take advantage of the Australian Curriculum. Year 7 students will have access to specialist staff and facilities that provide challenging and age-appropriate learning experiences, as well as variety and the intellectually challenging and age-appropriate support that adolescents need during this important life phase. We will continue to work with ACAR to develop the Australian Curriculum and to ensure that students in Queensland get the best education they can.

I acknowledge the fact that, with Health, we will continue to ensure that we have the necessary funding. When these two portfolio areas are considered together, they take up almost 50 per cent of the budget. That shows the importance of these portfolio areas to the Newman government and to the people of Queensland. This bill is very important as it is continuing work that has progressed for some time.

Again, I thank the members who have made contributions this evening. The member for Gladstone raised an issue about the tuition fees. I am happy to progress the details and advise her about her particular query when I have the chance to get that information. I look forward to the

consideration of the bill in detail. Once again, I thank all members for their contributions. I acknowledge the importance of education, especially as we look forward to progressing these matters. We have added the prep year and we have moved year 7 to secondary school. However, I am committed to ensuring that we do not just do these things for the sake of it; we should also be seeing better results from our school students to ensure that, in a world-class system, we are competitive with other states. Parents want to know that ours is a world-class system and I am confident that it is. The director-general has made me very aware of his intention to ensure that we focus not just on doing something for the sake of it but also on getting better results from these things. Simply adding years or moving years will not automatically lead to better outcomes; we have to look at the data and the research, and we have to check the outcomes to ensure that we are always progressing.

Education is a section of policy around which there will always be a lot of debate as it is a very vibrant sector, and that is exactly as it should be. We want to ensure that we have well considered ideas, not ideas thought of on the run by people who bring them in here or take them to policy committees, thinking that they are things that the government should be progressing because of particular biases or ideas that they may have. I have said that before in this place. Our kids are too important. You do not sit around a barbecue or at the pub and say, 'I reckon we should just do something like bring back external exams because that will make us more competitive.' We have announced a number of reviews of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board and the OP system. There are other issues that we are constantly reviewing and will always review, no matter who is in government. Education is a never-ending race. Again, I thank members for their contributions and commend the bill to the House.