




Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (4.07 pm): Today I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2013—a bill that shows this government’s unwavering commitment to education in this state. Before I speak to the bill itself, I want to thank my fellow committee members, committee staff and our committee chair, Rosemary Menkens. It is always a privilege having you as our committee chair. You are always a guiding light for us.

Albert, as I keep alluding to in this House, is a part of the growth corridor of the northern Gold Coast and the southern Logan regions. It is made up of young families. As at June 2011, the Albert electorate’s most numerous age group was 25 to 44, making up about 32 per cent of the population. The age bracket between zero to 14—the age group that this bill directly affects—makes up about 25 per cent of the population in Albert and roughly equates to 15,000 individuals. The state-wide average for the bracket of zero to 14 is 19.4 per cent, so that just goes to show how many more individuals of that young age reside in the Albert electorate. These figures show how this legislation will impact in the electorate of Albert compared to other places in Queensland.

Education is a key cornerstone for Albert families. As a parent—and I am sure I can speak for all of us here—we want what is best for our children. Enrolment and full-time attendance in prep are considered essential to enable students to take full advantage of the Australian Curriculum and develop the foundation skills and knowledge and understanding for this level of schooling.

This bill recognises prep as the first year of schooling and ensures the basic allocation of semesters for a student in order to complete school from prep to year 12. The aim of the bill is to maximise the attendance of students to give them the best start in life and help them achieve success.

I must add that in a recent visit by Police Commissioner Ian Stewart to Highland Reserve State School he certainly conveyed a positive impression of what he saw at the school. I have to add that, as we were walking past a classroom, one of the younger students, who may have been in prep—he was certainly of that age group—yelled out, ‘There must be a big police investigation in the school today having all of these police officers around.’ That just shows members how young minds are very inquisitive and how they are certainly open to their environment. They know what is going on. So at this age it is imperative for our students to have prep as a core basis of their education. Giving our children the best start in life is crucial. Prep is designed to prepare students for the demands of school life.

Some may say that this bill is only a symbolic amendment, but I certainly feel that it is a lot more. It is a commitment to providing 13 years of state education and providing a framework for our future. As a parent of a two-year-old daughter who is an absolute whiz on the iPad—she knows how to play education games et cetera—I know the world is changing and that we must adjust to keep up with future technologies. Certainly, having prep to get kids’ minds developing early is crucial.

This bill also includes amendments to streamline the transition of year 7 to secondary schools. In recent times, the Coomera and Albert electorates have experienced a massive amount of

development and schools have been constructed to handle a large increase in population in those areas, especially in Pimpama, Coomera Springs, Coomera and Upper Coomera. The new Pimpama State Secondary College is physically located in the electorate of Coomera—next door to my electorate—represented by Michael Crandon MP, who is a very good hardworking colleague of mine. That new school had a year 7 cohort allocated to it on its opening.

I should add that, as my electorate is part of the southern Logan and northern Gold Coast growth corridor, there has been an influx of students and the government continues to fund crucial expansion of education facilities in my electorate. As I have enlightened the House, recently the Norfolk Village State School received funding for additional classrooms, costing \$1.5 million. Highland Reserve State School has also been allocated temporary classrooms to meet the demands of a growing population. The principals of those schools, Chris Capra and David Roach, are certainly very strong voices for their schools. All the school principals in the Albert electorate are very vocal in terms of getting what is best for their students. The department is well aware of the growth requirements of my electorate. I harass the department on a regular basis fighting for what is necessary for my local area.

This move of year 7 to secondary education gives year 7 students access to specialised secondary teachers and facilities that are appropriate to their age group and academic challenges. This move maximises the benefit of the Australian Curriculum and puts Queensland on a par with schools in other states.

The bill also helps address concerns by non-state schools by reducing the administrative burdens that are associated with their accreditation to offer year 7 in secondary schools. The removal of these burdens makes it possible for non-state schools to offer year 7 education in secondary schools for 2015. That should significantly reduce the processing time for accreditation. Furthermore, the accreditation boards will not need to consider a school's ability to meet the prescribed accreditation requirements if the school is accredited to offer secondary education. If a non-state school wishes to offer year 7 after 2015 as secondary education, it will have to apply for accreditation. As I say, this move of year 7 to secondary school puts Queensland on a par with other jurisdictions and it certainly is positive for education in this state.

This bill does not change the rules on compulsory schooling. However, it makes an important amendment to allow for the cancellation of enrolments of international students at state schools for the nonpayment of tuition fees. In this regard Queensland is not alone, as all states charge tuition fees to dependant students. All parents are advised before they apply for a visa that they must enrol their children in school and that they must provide to the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship evidence that they have sufficient funds to pay school fees. Currently, I believe there is about \$1.5 million owing in outstanding tuition fees, which the department is experiencing difficulty recouping. To prevent any confusion, I should add that students entering Australia on New Zealand passports or refugee families do not need to pay school fees. That arrangement will not change as a result of the bill. My electorate has quite a large number of people from New Zealand.

It is great to see that all sides of the House are supporting this bill. This is a very proactive bill. It is crucial to recognise prep as the first year of learning. So I thank the opposition for supporting this bill, because this is the best way forward for our state. We are the custodians of this state and our children are our future. I believe that this bill will certainly be a positive move forward for Queensland. I certainly commend the bill to the House.