



Speech By
Mark Boothman

MEMBER FOR ALBERT

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (8.01 pm): I rise to make a reasonably brief contribution to the Education and Care Services Bill 2013. At the outset I thank the committee chair, Rosemary Menkens, and wish her a happy birthday. My fellow committee members and I certainly enjoyed the cake. I thank Bernice for taking the time to make that beautiful banana cake. I also thank the members for Waterford, Lytton, Condamine and Woodridge. It is certainly a pleasure to work with them on the committee and to consider the very important education initiatives that come from the department. Most importantly, I thank the minister for putting these common-sense bills before parliament. When it comes down to it, we are here to serve the people of Queensland—to reduce red tape and to make life easier for businesses, in this case our local child-care providers.

The objectives of the bill are straightforward. The bill seeks to establish a new regulatory framework for services currently regulated under the Child Care Act 2002 that aligns with the Education and Care Services National Law (Queensland) Act 2011 whilst retaining some elements of the Child Care Act 2002; repeal the Child Care Act 2002; and make consequential amendments to other legislation.

My wife is a former child-care worker. When I first met her she worked for ABC. She was certainly very passionate about the child-care industry. Having visited child-care facilities on many occasions I can say that they are fantastic places for kids to interact with each other, to learn to play and share toys et cetera. That is certainly a wonderful thing.

An integral part of this legislation is cutting red tape and reducing the compliance burden imposed on child-care businesses. This is reflective of the firm commitment this government made to the people of Queensland in relation to business in general. This government has delivered a wide range of red-tape-reduction reforms to help many businesses including in the agriculture industry through reforming vegetation management laws, providing easy access to water bores for landowners, streamlining housing contracts and simplifying environmental approvals by removing 20 ERAs. This helps businesses such as local mechanics. These are just a few of the key reforms this government has undertaken to reduce red tape in local areas. This bill is another example of this government's commitment to creating a better environment for businesses to develop and thrive in Queensland.

Highland Reserve State School has an early learning centre and there are child-care centres right throughout my electorate. This bill will make a huge difference to the residents of Albert. As I have informed the House previously, my electorate and the Albert region have a lot of young families—people starting out in life. You could say it is a mortgage belt electorate. This legislation will have great ramifications in my local area.

Recently I had the privilege of visiting the Coomera Springs early learning centre. One of the individuals who participated in the Queensland Plan consultation process, Sue Durance, actually works at this early learning centre. She provides a very good point of view when it comes to early

education and what needs to be done. She was certainly very vocal at the Queensland Plan summit in Mackay. It was very worthwhile having her there.

The job of members of parliament is to build stronger employment prospects in our local areas and for the people we represent. Failure to do so certainly impedes economic growth and reduces development in our local areas. One thing I have always found with the Labor Party is that they have an affinity for building bureaucracy and making things hard for small businesses. Building vast bureaucracies can only be classified as non-economic because it relies on taxation, not productivity.

Developing cost-effective business models through better legislation creates proactive development of economic outcomes to expand employment prospects. This is critical, especially in my area. Promoting businesses in my area and making it easier for them to do business certainly does help my mortgage belt electorate. This bill is designed to reduce the burden. It actually creates a situation whereby businesses such as child-care centres are relieved of undue requirements and unnecessary red tape in relation to the educational demands on potential staff.

This bill implements the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments. The national law regulates approximately 98 per cent of the 2½ thousand child-care service providers in Queensland.

This legislation has ramifications for local kindergartens, our long-day-care centres, family day-care centres and outside school hours care centres. In the electorate of Albert many families have both parents working to sustain the family budget. Things can certainly get tight. If both of those parents are not working, it is extremely difficult for them to make ends meet. So the people of my electorate certainly rely on these services. Other services that will continue under the Child Care Act 2002 are limited child-care services that receive funding from the Queensland government, such as early childhood and care services, including disability services, occasional care services and budget funded services that do not receive the child-care benefit.

The amendments contained in this legislation do not cause any increases in fees, which I believe is very important for small businesses. That shows that this government is proactive in helping our small businesses flourish. Unfortunately, the former government felt that it was not prudent to do that. It just bogged down small businesses with red tape and legislation. Under the old system, the service would pay a \$500 application fee for a licence and a renewal fee of \$300 every three years. This bill replaces those fees with a three-year process of a yearly fee of \$100 and provides a perpetual approval system to mitigate red tape. In addition, there will be a one-off fee of \$100 to grant a Queensland provider approval and a \$100 fee for a Queensland service approval. That amounts to a total of \$200 compared to the \$500 fee that was in place under the Child Care Act 2002.

As my colleague the member for Burnett said, that extra money could go towards providing better resources for the kids. I can certainly say that my daughter, who goes to the local child-care centre at Upper Coomera, has a whale of a time playing with the toys at that centre. She thoroughly enjoys her time there. If through that saving those centres can put more resources into the learning activities for the kids, that will be all the better for the kids and the child-care centre. This bill also provides a high degree of accountability by ensuring that the service is maintained through three yearly inspections.

In Queensland's recent history there have been multiple natural disasters. These natural disasters have caused extensive disruption to lives and businesses. This bill allows for services to be quickly relocated in the event of a natural disaster. That will limit the impact of downtime in providing care in these affected communities and will help get people's lives back on track sooner. This year marks my ninth year of involvement in the SES. Back in 2010 in the Grantham and Lowood areas I helped with the flood recovery. I can certainly say that if this legislation had been in place back then it would have made life just that little bit easier. Being able to relocate child-care services and provide some semblance of normality to those people's lives would have been appreciated. I commend our minister for putting this amendment in the bill. It is really good. As an SES volunteer, I can certainly say that it would have made a huge difference to those people in those flood affected areas.

The last section of the bill that I would like to cover relates to the educational requirements. Each service is required to appoint a supervisor, who will have a similar function to that of a director. As I alluded to earlier in my speech, my wife worked in a child-care centre. I became very good friends with the director of that child-care centre. She was a lovely lady and was very proactive with the kids in trying to give them some nice little learning outcomes and make their time at the child-care centre enjoyable. For supervisors to be required to hold a two-year diploma-level qualification or to be

actively working towards achieving one would attract more people to the industry. One could say that if we set the educational requirement too high we could scare people from entering the industry. But I believe that the department is right in saying that a two-year diploma-level qualification is spot-on for what is required. I have spoken to my wife about this matter on many occasions. She agrees that that qualification would suffice.

This is great legislation. I wish to thank my fellow committee members. They have done an absolutely fantastic job. It is always a pleasure having Rosemary as our committee chair. She always strives to achieve the best on behalf of the committee and she gives us a lot of guidance. But most importantly, I would like to thank Minister John-Paul Langbroek for his continued proactive approach to education. You can always tell we are doing the right thing when all the unionists are jumping up and down. They know that we are doing the right thing. I certainly thank the minister for his hard work and diligence when it comes to this—

Mr Hart interjected.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I take that interjection from the member for Burleigh. Yes, the minister is certainly doing something right. The minister has been proactive. He is reforming education in this state, which is desperately needed. It is really wonderful being a member of the Education and Innovation Committee and considering bills introduced by the education minister, John-Paul Langbroek. I commend this bill to the House.