




Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR ALBERT**

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**EDUCATION (STRENGTHENING DISCIPLINE IN STATE SCHOOLS)  
AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (11.54 am): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Strengthening Discipline in State Schools) Amendment Bill. This bill is a direct action plan that gives our education leaders—the principals—the power to enforce stronger discipline through tougher disciplinary powers, flexibility and independence in decision making. This amendment is long overdue and, once again, shows that this government is willing to get on with the job and strengthen discipline in Queensland state schools.

When dealing with misbehaving students, early-intervention strategies are crucial. This bill sets out a range of formal strategies that principals can use to implement discipline. Certainly, discipline plays an important role in the social development of young minds. It facilitates good order and management in schools to create a positive learning environment. The key to this is behavioural change for those who disturb the classroom.

Currently, principals lack sufficient options. As a principal of a school in my electorate of Albert said, it is like being a toothless tiger. Presently, detention can be enforced only during lunch and for short periods after school. These limited time periods may be unsuitable for the offence committed. Our communities expect tougher penalties across society and I believe that it is appropriate that dealing with behavioural issues in a child's early years is certainly crucial. As has been highlighted, early intervention produces a society where social etiquette and behavioural norms are carried through life. I certainly agree with the comments of the member for Gladstone. If discipline is not exercised in the home then schools are the backup. A failure to instil in children the importance of respecting themselves and others only impedes their social development.

I believe that appropriate discipline has the potential to be the circuit-breaker or the catalyst to provide a good grounding for the development of productive members of our society in the future. To do that, the bill amends the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 to broaden the options that principals can use in their day-to-day work when dealing with disciplinary issues. A principal's role is to be the community leader of the school. Certainly, the principals in the schools in my electorate do not have the ammunition they need to deal with unruly students. This bill goes a long way towards rectifying that situation. For instance, the bill provides two initiatives: community service interventions and discipline improvement plans. These two strategies will provide principals with the necessary framework to deal with inappropriate behaviour prior to resorting to suspensions and exclusions. This is a way of dealing with individuals quickly and efficiently.

I would say that, when we were younger, certainly a lot of members in this House probably would have got up to naughty behaviour at school. I am looking at the member for Lytton over there, who has a big smirk on his face. This bill provides a direct action plan to deal with individuals. It will go some way towards changing their attitudes so that they can have an expectation of what life is like

after school and that is, if you do something wrong, you will be punished for it. So if they are in school, if they do something wrong for it, they will be punished for it.

Creating this flexibility for disciplinary options should allow for a reduction in the number of student suspensions or exclusions because it gives principals more intervention options when dealing with these troublesome students. It also helps prevent the student who is being put on a suspension from falling behind. I think that is crucial. Students on suspension miss out on crucial schooling and could potentially end up dropping out of school. Unfortunately there will always be students who require more intensive management than the mainstream classroom can provide. In these instances the bill provides for an increase in short-term suspension from five to 10 days and long-term suspension from six to 20 days to 11 to 20 days.

When it comes down to it, this bill is about making schools safer. This bill is about protecting the rights of other students in schools to learn at school. Students who require more intensive management could potentially go on to achieve remarkable goals because of early intervention and the realisation that they have done the wrong thing and society does not accept that. This is an absolutely fantastic bill. The P&Cs in the Albert electorate and the constituents of Albert are 100 per cent behind it. It is a great piece of legislation. If we were allowed to clap in the House I would clap for the minister. I support this bill.