




Speech By  
**Shane Knuth**

**MEMBER FOR DALRYMPLE**

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### **EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr KNUTH** (Dalrymple—KAP) (4.57 pm): I rise to speak to the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. The policy objectives and the reason for them, as explained in the explanatory notes, are that the bill will support the implementation of the move of year 7 to secondary school from 2015; include the preparatory year, prep, in a state school student's basic allocation; and allow for the cancellation of the enrolment of international students at state schools for nonpayment of fees. As the previous speakers have said, the most important issues that will ever come your way are health and education. Education is an important part of the development of children—right from the beginning to the end, when they leave school and prepare for a job that will lead to a bigger and better future. The push for the transition of year 7 into high school is something that the KAP has opposed from the beginning due to the cost factor. It will cost approximately \$600 million, and that money could have been better used elsewhere. But we can see the negative impact that that cost factor will have, especially on rural constituencies, and the burden that will be placed on those people in rural and regional areas.

Schooling is so important. I know that the minister listed all the schools that Labor closed while it was in government. I have seen a number of schools close in my electorate. Likewise, the government is doing the same thing. A school is basically the social fabric of a community. If you lose the school and you lose the hospital, you lose the community. This is why there is a lot of passion when it comes to closing schools. One school that is closing is the Stuart State School. I attended Stuart State School. It is a great school.

**Mr Dillaway:** It's not closing. It's under consideration.

**Mr KNUTH:** It is under consideration. Well, that is good.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Miss Barton): Order! Member for Dalrymple, could you please direct your comments through the chair and not across the chamber?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. Firstly, what he is referring to has nothing to do with the provisions of the bill. Secondly, he is asserting that Stuart State School is closing when no decision has been made.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Minister, what is your point of order?

**Mr LANGBROEK:** My point of order is that we have a misrepresentation coming from the member.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** If you believe there is a misrepresentation, I suggest that you write to the Speaker. The member for Dalrymple has the call.

**Mr KNUTH:** Madam Deputy Speaker, we do know how important these schools are to these communities. The push to transition year 7 students to high school is very similar to what the Labor Party did to all those schools in rural and regional Queensland.

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Yes, it is very similar to what the Labor Party has done. As I was saying, there is a cost factor in transitioning year 7 into high school. It is a big burden to people in the bush, some of whom have to travel a hundred kilometres to take their kids to a bus stop. But they are prepared to do it provided there is a local school in that township. If there is a local school in that township, they have an opportunity to send their children to receive education at that local state primary school. What this is going to do is place extra cost on those families, and I can understand the concern of those families in regard to that cost. But at a time when we are in debt, as the government has mentioned, this is an opportunity where we could have used that \$600 million to pay off debt rather than waste it transitioning year 7 students.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** This is Labor policy, and we opposed it while the Labor Party was in government. I know that this government opposed the closure of many schools, too, but now they are being closed.

We must understand that schools are the hubs of communities. Charters Towers is an example of this. We have three private schools, we have a high school, we have three primary schools—Richmond Hill, Millchester and Central—and we have the School of Distance Education. In the surrounding districts we have Ravenswood, Greenvale, Homestead and Pentland, and they are everything to these communities. I am very proud to say that Charters Towers is not up, even though I do have schools that stretch from Moranbah to Kilcummin and right up to the Atherton Tableland. They are all good schools. We lost the Upper Barron school, which the minister promised he would save. I am not pointing the finger at him, but we lost that great school.

I attended Stuart State School. When members mention that it is under consideration, I hope that is true. When I attended Stuart State School, back in those days we had a monkey bar and we had a pipe. There was not much there back in those days, but all the students hung out at the pipe. They did their homework in that pipe and they had their smoko in that pipe. That pipe was everything to those students. The only students who could go into that pipe were the grade 7 students. As we saw the transition of students from grade 7 to grade 8 and as I was going from grade 6 to grade 7, we said to ourselves, 'One of the great things about students going from grade 7 to grade 8 is that we are going to have that pipe.'

I believe we need provision in this bill to allow children who are transitioning from grade 7 into high school to access a School of Distance Education where the primary school is more than 50 kilometres from the nearest high school, rather than parents having to bear a massive cost in sending their children to a private school and likewise the children being away from their families. I do not think that is much to ask for. A lot of families are going to be burdened here. Sometimes when legislation is drawn up in the city there is no understanding from the bureaucracy of how rural and regional Queensland operates. I really believe the minister needs to look at a School of Distance Education being accessible for students at a primary school which is more than 50 kilometres from the nearest high school. With independent public schools, it is very difficult to gauge whether they are successful. There is always a concern with regard to independent public schools—

**Mr Dillaway** interjected.

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** When Queensland Rail was corporatised, the next step was that it was privatised.

**Mrs Frecklington** interjected

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Order! Honourable members!

**Mr KNUTH:** There is always an issue going from one to the other when we have independent public schools, but I believe that if they are going to transition and even if the principal puts in a submission and has dialogue with the community and with the teachers that still does not mean there is overall support from those teachers. Likewise, there is not overall support from that school. Just because a submission is made—

**Mr Cox** interjected.

**Mr KNUTH:** Yes, I know. It may appear to have support, but if there is a vote or if there is a petition and it does not have the support of the teachers or the community, does that necessarily mean that we have to support that submission because it has been put in? We need to really evaluate the position of the community, the parents and the teachers in terms of whether they want to go ahead with it. It is very important to ensure that the principal and the school, if they are going in that direction, bring the families of the schools with them.

*(Time expired)*