




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**MOTION: EDUCATION, BETTER SCHOOLS PLAN**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (6.00 pm): There is no argument that local schools need reform and appropriate long-term funding for education in Queensland. I have met with local schools and local Queensland Teachers Union representatives on many occasions and we agree that something needs to be done after years of Labor neglect and mismanagement.

As has been raised on this side of the House many times during debates, I am extremely frustrated and disappointed in the former ALP government and the previous member for Burnett for underfunding education and disability services in this state while wasting money on the disastrous Health payroll system and other failed projects. The current Gonski debate—or whatever it is called now—is not about the money. The debate is about very important principles that this LNP state government takes seriously. We do not want to see funding for universities cut. The funding for Gonski proposed by the federal government comes by taking away money from our local universities. We do not want to see funding for our kindergartens cut. Federal funding for kindergartens continues only until December 2014 and then it stops.

In last Friday's pre-election economic statement the federal government cut \$242 million in funding for apprenticeships and trainees. The LNP government must ensure that 300 schools are not worse off. We want federal Labor to get rid of the red tape and the bureaucracy meddling in Queensland schools. It is the height of hypocrisy that we see today pork-barrelling by the federal Labor government making a desperate pitch to Queenslanders, promising \$450 million to boost after school care programs. I am confused: Labor can cut funding to universities, kindergartens and hospitals, but refuses to give the students and teachers in my electorate a good deal on school funding. If these reasonable assurances were provided to the school students and people of Queensland, the Queensland government would sign up to the proposed reforms. However, the government is not going to sign up to something when federal Labor is not prepared to negotiate on these important issues.

Now that the federal election has been called and all the bullyboy tactics of the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, are evident, all we want is a fair deal. What is truly unbelievable is that we were not offered the same deal on education funding as Victorian students and schools. Why would the Prime Minister, a Queensland Prime Minister, treat our Queensland students and teachers with such disrespect? In contrast, the Queensland government knows that real differences to our education system are made in the classroom, not the bureaucracy. Our approach is to provide timely and targeted investment in practical measures to improve education through committing \$835 million over five years in additional funding. In addition to Great Teachers = Great Results and the almost \$6 billion a year already invested in education, the recent Queensland budget also provides for an increase in Education expenditure of 6.6 per cent.

With all the talk about the unknown details of the proposed \$6.5 billion Labor Gonski reforms, it is timely to remind Queenslanders about the LNP plan to improve teacher quality and give young Queenslanders the best possible start in life. The plan would invest \$535 million of additional funding

in Queensland's schools. We need to focus every dollar on the things we know work. Teachers play a critical role in the lives of Queensland children by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve success in their futures. The initiative provides an opportunity to recognise our high-performing teachers as well as reward them with accelerated career pathways. The plan focused on two crucial areas: professional excellence in teaching and boosting school autonomy. The initiative consists of 15 actions including a structured annual performance process, mentoring for beginning teachers, accelerated progression and paid postgraduate study for high-performing teachers, and fast-tracking autonomy initiatives for schools. We also want to enhance discipline powers across the state school system and allow the school community to play a greater role in the selection process for principals by removing union representatives from selection panels.

What is of real concern in this ongoing debate is our commitment for a better deal for Queensland schools and the ineffective procession of federal education ministers who would not, or could not, provide the schools in my electorate with an appropriated expected outcome. I have heard that you can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. That was said by Abraham Lincoln in a memorable contribution. However, federal Labor has tried to manipulate this serious issue and debate, it is clear, with complete contempt for the electorate. Labor believes you can fool enough of the people enough of the time to persuade the electorate that your 'new way' of politics does indeed represent a break from the past and that public disgust with a Labor minority government is somehow not relevant to Labor's desperate campaign for re-election. However, Queenslanders are a wake-up to Kevin Rudd. They know what Labor and Kevin Rudd did to Queensland previously, and what Labor is doing to Australia. People in my electorate want a responsible, grown-up government to fix Labor's mess. We will be honest and upfront about the mess left by state Labor and we will be honest and upfront about what is needed to fix it. We will be fixing it by sorting out Labor's waste and inefficiency, not by raising taxes and raiding people's savings.

I support the education minister's amendment. I support the LNP's endeavours to get better funding for my schools in my electorate. I think it is very important that the LNP and Queenslanders go on the journey with the LNP. We need to be a wake-up to Kevin Rudd.