




Speech By
Hon. John-Paul Langbroek

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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**EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY
BILL**

 **Hon. JH LANGBROEK** (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (Minister for Education, Training and Employment) (12.21 pm), in reply: At the outset I thank all members who have contributed to this debate in relation to the bill. I take on board many of the comments that members have made about education being a very important part of the future of the Queensland economy and our society but also that it is in a constant state of flux and development. This bill has been brought forward because of the necessity for changes that have been brought upon the system through the development of the Australian Curriculum but, as many have mentioned, also because the original Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 was outdated in terms of how it could deal with aspects of the Australian Curriculum.

The most important issue is improving students' results in Queensland. We have an unashamed focus on boosting results which will come through the quality of teachers and working with them to improve the product they are able to deliver, making sure our schools have autonomy—there are more local decisions—and also disciplinary measures. Those issues have had significant exposure in the last day or two. When we ask parents what they consider to be the most important issue they definitely say it is teacher quality. The second issue they consider to be important is behaviour and then curriculum. Parents do not necessarily have as great an understanding as the teachers who provide the education. There is no doubt that the content of the curriculum is an important part of the education system. That is why federally there was an agreement between all education ministers that there would be an Australian Curriculum that was determined by the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority but that assessment is to remain the property of the states. People have said that the Queensland Studies Authority no longer has relevance because of the presence of an Australian Curriculum. Many people do not understand that the Australian Curriculum is not in every subject in every school in every year level. I think members here, through their research on this bill, may well have been surprised to discover that at the moment in Queensland the Australian Curriculum has been introduced into prep to year 10 subjects in maths, English, science, history and geography. There is a need for the state to maintain an ability to do this assessment. That was the focus of this review.

I acknowledge the member for Woodridge, the opposition spokesperson for this bill, and I will deal with some of the issues that she raised. I want to put into the record of *Hansard* why there was a need for a statutory body. It is a major important step forward in our relentless quest to improve student results. We are modernising the statutory body that oversees the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. There had to be a body in Queensland. While ACARA, the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority, was determining the content, there had to be a process for us to bring it into Queensland given the nature of our state, in terms of diversity of the students in many of the electorates and those issues that make education potentially more difficult to deliver in some of the far-flung parts of our state. There was a need to modernise the body that would

be preparing the additional syllabuses—or syllabi, in answer to the member for Burdekin who was not sure what the plural was. Either is acceptable. Then we had to coordinate and oversee the assessment of this content in order to facilitate student admission to tertiary and other learning institutions.

To give members a brief history, in April 2012 there was a review of the Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act because it was over 10 years old and it predated the establishment of ACARA and the rollout of the Australian Curriculum. There had been a number of reviews. In 2006 Emeritus Professor Philip Meade conducted a review of the QSA act. Subsequent to that, ACARA was set up by the federal government and the states agreed to work with the federal government to implement the Australian Curriculum. We also had the Webbe-Weller review of non-departmental government bodies and there was work undertaken as part of the proposal of the previous government to establish a new education standards authority. The review confirmed that there was a need to clarify the statutory functions of the QSA. In particular, the syllabus functions in the QSA act do not recognise the implementation of the Australian Curriculum. This legislation will make sure that QCAA formally recognises that. The review also highlighted the need to support effective corporate governance and clear strategic direction. Previous reviews have suggested that the large size and representative nature of the QSA may have limited its effectiveness as a governing body. I know the opposition expressed concerns about that, and there were concerns expressed by the member for Condamine about the representation, for example, from tertiary institutions, and I will come to that in a moment.

In a nutshell, these were fundamental issues which required transformative change. In this context the government has endorsed the creation of a new statutory entity and the development of a new and more contemporary legislative framework. It is impractical to suggest, as some people do, that due to personality differences or concerns that they have had about the QSA not being as communicative as they might have liked, or due to their history and association with the QSA, we should just get rid of the QSA. That is a simplistic notion when one looks at the roles and purposes of the QSA. We had to make sure, and have made sure through this bill, that curriculum and assessment was overseen. That is why it is necessary to retain a state body.

The introduction of the Australian Curriculum involves content and achievement but does not remove the need for curriculum certification and testing functions to be performed by an independent state authority. Queensland senior syllabus documents are required as a basis for year 12 certification and tertiary entrance. Queensland may need to develop subjects in areas not covered by the Australian Curriculum, such as accounting or languages. Queensland will still be responsible for assessment in all senior subjects whether they are based on the Australian or Queensland curriculum.

Ensuring consistent senior assessment standards, conducting state-wide testing—for example, NAPLAN and the Queensland Core Skills test—and ranking students for tertiary entrance—for example, issuing OPs—are high-stakes processes that affect tens of thousands of Queensland students and their families each year. These functions are best conducted by a body that is separate from the department and the state schooling sector. All other Australian states and territories maintain statutory curriculum authorities that are responsible for senior curriculum, senior certification and related processes to ensure the comparability of school based assessment in the senior years.

I want to deal with some of the specific concerns of the member for Woodridge. I acknowledge that, of course, on this side of the House we share her value of education. Coming as she does from Woodridge and being a longstanding member of the House, I know that she understands the importance of education as the basis for improving people's lives. I am pleased that she shares our wish to modernise the system whilst paying tribute to the work of the QSA, as I am happy to do here today. We pay tribute to both the staff and the governing body for the work they have done in the past number of years. I assure the House that the new governing body, the QCAA, will continue to represent all sectors of schooling in Queensland. It will include knowledgeable and suitable appointees to oversee its important function.

Clause 22 outlines the appointees to the authority. Of course, there will be a CEO. As has been mentioned by numerous members, there will be one representative each of Independent Schools Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. The board will include four nominees of the minister. The explanatory notes very pointedly state that one of those four positions should be someone with relevant corporate, governance or financial qualifications or experience. The board will be able to get advice from a subcommittee established to ensure that they are widely consulting. By reducing the size of the board from 20 to seven, we are enabling the board to have the agility and skills to deal with complex and important matters in a timely fashion. Of course, we are yet

to appoint those additional board members. There are many other avenues to consult and to include representative groups from the QCAA.

Some say that we should keep the status quo, that the board membership should stay at 20, as otherwise obviously some people will no longer be able to be on that board. Let us look at the governance as it has been. It is important to have effective governance. It is critical. It will manage significant public resources. It will need to lead the implementation of new senior Australian Curriculum subjects and any changes arising from the review of senior assessment and tertiary entrance. It has a relatively large governing body with 20 members nominated by a wide range of stakeholder organisations. In 2006, before the LNP came to government, Professor Emeritus Philip Meade conducted a review and raised concerns that the size and representative nature of QSA membership may limit its effectiveness as a governing body. This government has determined that, on balance, a more streamlined governing body would be more likely to support effective corporate governance and clear strategic direction.

QCAA will continue to be informed by the expertise and experience of key stakeholders. Rather than being provided through direct representation, this will be provided through participation on committees. Under clause 21 of the bill, the governing body has a broad power to delegate matters to committees. I expect syllabus development by QCAA will continue to be informed by both discipline experts and those with experience and first-hand knowledge of school operations. Similarly, tertiary entrance processes will continue to be informed by Queensland universities and tertiary institutions.

The member for Woodridge was also concerned about the clauses of the bill relating to the payment for material generated by the board. It is important for the member and others who expressed those concerns to look beyond the boundaries of this chamber. Queensland stands at the forefront of innovation in material to assist teachers in the classroom. It is a valuable resource that others beyond Queensland would like to share and in that sharing there is a place for cost recovery. For example, schools overseas that implement the Queensland curriculum currently pay for the licence. I will come to some details in a moment. This bill ensures that we continue that sort of activity in the future.

Let us look at the current level of funding that QSA receives. It is actually funded through grant funding from the Department of Education, Training and Employment. That is budgeted at \$36.4 million in 2013-14. It has some of its own source revenue, largely relating to the sale of QSA products and services. In other words, under licence with the Department of Education, Training and Employment, which is responsible for dealing with the formal parts of the revenue raising, it has been able to raise money and it has had its own source revenue of \$2.1 million in 2013. It has been raising revenue, but we are making sure that now the clear statutory functions and contemporary governance arrangements will support the effective allocation of its resources.

QCAA will have a specific function to commercially exploit intellectual property in the products and services it has developed. At the moment, there is existing uncertainty about the QSA's capacity to commercialise its products and services. It will support the government's ability to market and promote Queensland curriculum products and services to international students and schools. In a similar vein, the bill specifically enables the provision of testing and tertiary entrance services to international students attending recognised schools. The bill streamlines and updates a range of other operational provisions and processes. For example, complex provisions relating to the operation of student accounts have been simplified and detailed procedural provisions relating to governing body procedures have been removed, consistent with contemporary drafting practice.

Clause 18 of the bill clarifies the QCAA's capacity to commercially develop its own intellectual property by providing a specific commercialisation power. As I have already mentioned, currently it does not have an equivalent commercialisation function under its own legislation. Now, they will be able to licence the use of their material and, as I have already said, ensure that that aligns with government support for emerging opportunities to market and promote high-quality educational products and services to overseas markets and international schools.

I have had the pleasure of attending a couple of international schools overseas. Five overseas schools have entered into commercial arrangements to use QSA curriculum products and services: the Australian International School in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates; Nauru Secondary School; Hangzhou Dong Fang School in China, which I visited in June or July last year; the Suzhou International Foreign Language School in China; and the Ma'anshan Foreign Language School in China. In those schools, students may elect to study a range of QSA authority subjects and authority registered subjects. They are taught and assessed in English over two years and work towards receiving a Queensland Certificate of Education. I spoke to parents of students at those schools. They said, 'We had the choice of sending our children to Queensland.' Of course, as a government we

would encourage that. However, should parents want to take advantage of a system that has a robust curriculum, we are happy to provide the syllabus that can be delivered by teachers who may not necessarily be from Queensland or Australia. That is what I saw happening at Hangzhou and Suzhou when I was there. It means giving parents more choice as to where their children can be educated. Certainly, that is very worthy. That is what we are encouraging with this new legislation, which really deals with the issue of commercialisation because we want to ensure that there are more opportunities that QCAA can take advantage of.

However, that is a different matter to saying that schools are going to have to pay for syllabuses and resources, which was mentioned by a number of members opposite. Certainly the member for Woodridge asked about that. I make this very clear: the inclusion in the bill of a commercialisation function does not reflect an intention to charge Queensland schools for core syllabus and curriculum products. That is pretty clear. I have made it clear why a commercialisation process is mentioned in the bill. For those who want to misinterpret mischievously why that is in there, I cannot be more clear: there is a commercialisation function to enable us to work on the world stage and develop intellectual property from which QCAA and the government can benefit. That does not mean that we are going to be charging Queensland schools for core syllabus and curriculum products.

The new bill has been developed on the basis that there may be some circumstances in which it would be appropriate and administratively efficient for the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority to directly enter arrangements for the commercial use of intellectual property rather than, as I have already mentioned, requiring all such arrangements to be administered by the department on QCAA's behalf. This may include consideration of requests from publishers to include extracts from QCAA syllabus materials as part of their texts. It does not mean that QCAA will seek a commercial rate of return in relation to the provision of curriculum products and services to Queensland schools. The QSA does not charge Queensland schools for access to its syllabus documents or for core curriculum resources that are provided to support their implementation. It is expected that QCAA will follow a similar approach.

I note that the member for Woodridge was also concerned about whether there would be interference from the minister in terms of directing the authority. Can I reassure the honourable member and anyone else who may be concerned that there is an appropriate distance legislated for in this bill to make sure that this does not happen. But as a statutory body it is also appropriate that there be a written statement of expectations and a very clear list of priorities from the minister. That does not mean, as some in the wider media would suggest, that the minister will go in and say, 'I do not like what you are teaching. I think you should be taking that particular book out of the library and taking that element out of a particular subject in terms of curriculum development.'

It is important to acknowledge that it is appropriate that the federal government undertake a review of the Australian Curriculum. It is not necessarily about specific content. It is a wide-ranging review. As I have travelled the state and listened to teachers and principals they have given me the feedback that in terms of the Australian Curriculum, developed by ACARA and brought into our schools, it is difficult for teachers to get through every element of a particular subject. It is appropriate that that be reviewed. To that end, this government supports wholeheartedly the new federal education minister Christopher Pyne's review to look at how the curriculum is being derived and to make sure that the processes in place to support our teachers at the front line are as good as they can be.

In Queensland we have had to pass on to teachers the mantra of adopt and adapt. We are not expecting them to take on every element of the subjects that we are currently doing in the Australian Curriculum in our P to 10 years. They do not have to take everything on. They can adopt and adapt for their local needs in order to make sure that their students are able to attain the elements they need to. It is certainly appropriate that we have a review. We have been happy to support that review.

In my statement of expectations I have expressed my hopes for the new board. I have said that the member for Woodridge's fears that it will be a political body overseeing a politically charged curriculum are completely unfounded. Clause 72(4) states very clearly that the minister is unable to give a direction about the content of the curriculum.

I thank those members on this side of the House who made contributions. The member for Nanango made a lot of statements, as others members did, about the achievements of the Newman government in the education field. As she noted, QCAA will help us to achieve the improvements in student outcomes that we are seeking. It is about modernising the legislative framework for curriculum, syllabus and assessment in this state.

The member for Burnett was also right. This is a very exciting time for education in this state. He hit the nail on the head with his comment that with change one must be careful and considered. QCAA will be both careful and considered. The member correctly identified that through the formation of committees there will be ample opportunities for representatives' communities and their schools to be included and consulted on matters considered by QCAA.

The member for Gaven was again confused. This bill is not about the OP review, which is currently being undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research, but there are elements within this bill that will allow QCAA to consider the results of that review. No decisions have been made.

I put on the record very clearly—and the member for Beaudesert made this point following the principal forum that we had in his electorate last week—there has been no direction by this government to Professor Geoff Masters and Dr Gabrielle Matters, who are leading this review. They put out a discussion paper last week so interested parties can have some input into this review of assessment practices—the OP review as it has been called. There has been no direction from this government about what those outcomes should be.

We want best practice and we want to make sure we have the best system in the 21st century for our students—a system that can stand up to any scrutiny, any criticism by anyone in any system, both in Australia and around the world. We want to make sure that when we do this we get it right. There has been no direction by me as the minister, no direction by the Premier, Campbell Newman, no direction by anyone else in this government to those independent authorities that will come up with the recommendations. The government will consider those.

In terms of the time frame, we have reassured everyone that the changes will not affect students until 2016. Students who were in year 8 last year will be affected in the sense that they will start year 11 in 2016. They will be the students who will be affected. I cannot be any more clear for people reading *Hansard* in terms of clarifying any of those misapprehensions and any conclusions that some members of the public are jumping to. We do not have a predetermined conclusion for this review.

The member for Gaven can be reassured that I will bring the government's response to the ACER review to the House in good time. He had fears about the introduction of a user-pays system. They are unfounded and they are characteristic of his confusion.

In his contribution the member for Albert spoke about principals in his area. I appreciate his words about the reforms of the education system that we, as a can-do government, already introduced. I appreciate him going the extra mile as a local member, as I know many members did, speaking to his principals and supporting our Great Results Guarantee.

To my colleague the Minister for Local Government, Community Recovery and Resilience, thank you for your support of the bill. As a cabinet we have talked about streamlining and strengthening the processes so critical to our schools. We are about reducing red tape and this is another example of this.

Thank you too to the member for the Burdekin, one of the whips in this place. As a teacher she is well placed to understand the challenges and joys faced throughout thousands of classrooms every day. We are committed as a government to supporting those teachers, and this legislation is part of keeping Queensland at the forefront of the education agenda. I have already thanked her for her chairmanship of the Education and Innovation Committee, and I will continue to do so. I thank the other members of that committee.

I thank the member for Pumicestone for her contribution. As she points out, this bill is a timely update reflecting the current curriculum arrangements as the Australian Curriculum continues to be rolled out.

We also had contributions from the members for Logan, Keppel, Townsville and Beaudesert. They are all advocating strongly on behalf of their schools. It really does show the importance of education that our local members—those privileged to be in this place—are able to go to those schools and see the practical realities of what happens in our schools.

I have also mentioned that the member for Condamine was concerned about the tertiary sector being involved in QCAA. As I have said, the board appointments are yet to be made. There are many avenues for consultation with interested parties, including universities.

Clause 13 of the bill requires that the processes for ranking students for tertiary entrance are to be developed in consultation with the minister. It would be expected that I would require assurance that the development of these processes has involved appropriate stakeholder consultation with

universities. I note for the member's benefit that there is no intention to charge Queensland schools for core syllabus and curriculum products.

In summary, I emphasise the Newman government's commitment to increasing productivity in our economy and enhancing the social improvement that education can bring. When the Premier talks about turbocharging the economy, there is no doubt that education is at the core of that. That is what honourable members here have acknowledged. The Great Results Guarantee is going to help students from prep to year 2 to reach the national minimum standard as a guarantee. This is a plan to help those students get there. If there is early intervention we will prevent a lot of problems later.

Importantly, we will increase productivity by making sure that our students are educated as best they can be and our teachers supported in the curriculum. People can be assured that QCAA will be up to date for the 21st century and in line with the arrangements that we have with our federal and interstate colleagues. This will make sure that we have a system that is at the forefront when compared to any other jurisdiction. This is an important plank, an important step on the road to making sure that education is always seen as a progressing field and one that is keeping up to date with the changes in the system. That is the commitment of the Newman government. That is the commitment of those on this side of the House. That is the commitment from me as minister. I commend the bill to the House.