




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (5.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. It is great to be able to follow the member for Nanango, who made such a passionate speech. This bill will help bring our education system in Queensland into step with changes that have occurred in education during the years since the current Queensland Studies Authority—the QSA—came into existence. Changes such as the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, the introduction of a preparatory year, universal access to kindergarten, NAPLAN testing and the trend towards vocational education in our schools means that this is a very exciting time for those who care deeply about setting up a better education system for our young people in Queensland.

However, this time of great change needs to be managed carefully. There is no better time than right now to take a step forward by replacing the QSA with a new body that is better structured to work with the current and future educational landscape. Having worked as part of the committee on its inquiry into this legislation, I firmly believe that the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority—the QCAA—that will be established by this bill is vital to achieving quality educational outcomes in Queensland schools now and into the future.

A key role of the QCAA will be to provide guidance, content and assessment processes where no provision exists in the Australian Curriculum. As the minister outlined in his introductory speech, the Australian Curriculum will set content and standards for key school subjects but not the entire range of subjects taught in our schools. It will still be up to each state to develop its own syllabus to determine content, standards of achievement and assessment processes for any subjects that are not covered by the national curriculum. In particular, with regard to the senior years 11 and 12, the Australian Curriculum goes only so far as to provide guidelines for content and standards of achievements in 15 subjects. It is still up to the states to provide a syllabus that determines how the content needs to be delivered and the assessment process in those subjects.

Apart from developing the syllabus for subjects where no provision exists in the Australian Curriculum, the functions of the QCAA will also include developing and accrediting kindergarten guidelines; developing and administering tests such as the Queensland Core Skills Test and NAPLAN; developing and administering processes to support school based assessment; supporting schools and early childhood education and care providers in the implementation of syllabus, the Australian Curriculum and kindergarten guidelines; handling student certification and the associated management of processes and student accounts; and ranking students for tertiary entrance. Clearly, this type of work that the QCAA will be doing should be the role of experienced educators representing a cross-section of our schools. Putting the responsibility of determining syllabus content and assessment procedures with an authority that is at arm's length from the government ensures

that the most qualified people are doing this very important work and relieves concerns about the politicisation of our school curriculum.

I support the sentiments of the minister who, in his introductory speech, recognised the hard work of those who served on the QSA. However, it is now time for a more streamlined governing body to take over the job of guiding education outcomes in Queensland. I believe that the new QCAA, with its seven-member governing body, will be capable of providing clear strategic direction and managing resources and effort across a range of demands. I note the provision in the legislation to include representatives from the three major school groups—state, independent and Catholic—to provide a balance of interests. Although the size of the governing body may have been reduced, the working committees that will advise them will include participation by a range of stakeholders including parents, employers, universities and training providers, thereby retaining vital input from a cross-section of our community.

I turn now to another significant difference between the existing QSA and the new QCAA. The new authority will be well positioned to take advantage of the significant commercial opportunities that come with having a world-class education system. The QCAA will have the capacity to commercially develop its own intellectual property. Strong opportunities are emerging to market high-quality educational products and services to international schools and students and it makes sense to utilise those opportunities. I note that during the inquiry a number of submissions expressed concern that such commercialisation may signal an intent to charge Queensland schools and students for core syllabus and curriculum products. I thank the minister for the assurance provided in his speech in response to the committee's report that there is no intention on the part of this government to charge Queensland's schools for those products.

This bill, which establishes the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, is a positive step towards fulfilling this government's commitment to bolstering our education system to meet the needs of modern Queensland. In closing, I thank my colleagues on the Education and Innovation Committee. I thank the secretariat—the wonderful people we work with—and, of course, I thank the minister for bringing this bill to the House.