




Speech By

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MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.12 pm): I rise to speak on the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. Like the chair of the committee, the member for Townsville, and the deputy chair, the member for Broadwater, I acknowledge that, while the committee members do not often agree, in this case there was quite a consensus. It was interesting to hear from the various people who addressed the committee. I have to back up the comments of the chair and the deputy chair that all 89 people in this House are advocating for a better education system for our young ones, who are the future leaders of the state. It is quite correct to say that everyone in this House is concerned about the future and the education of younger Queenslanders who are attending school now.

In 2007 prep commenced throughout Queensland. I have seen the benefits of prep in my schools, of which there are over 27 in my electorate. My electorate is a very low socio-economic area of Queensland, with one of the highest rates of youth unemployment and unemployment generally in the state and across the country. I have seen the benefits that children get from prep in schools such as Sunbury State School, Maryborough West State School and Granville State School in Maryborough. Sunbury State School has a very beneficial program called KOALAS Early Learning Program, which parents and prep students are involved in. It is getting absolutely great results. We know that we are getting good results because of prep.

I was looking at the latest NAPLAN results for the electorate and they are fantastic. With the money that has been invested by the Palaszczuk Labor government into education in my electorate, we are starting to see the results come through NAPLAN. As the local member, I am proud to say that we have had some really good results from NAPLAN. I congratulate all the teachers, teacher aides, principals and everyone in the regional education office in my electorate, who all go above and beyond the call of duty, especially when we look at the hours that teachers put in. We should congratulate the teachers for the work that they do. This subject is close to me, as I know quite a few teachers. Often we hear that teachers have X amount of holidays a year and have it pretty easy, but I know that that is not the case.

The bill provides that state or non-state school principals may not enrol a student in year 1 unless the child has undertaken prep. The only exceptions to that requirement in the bill are that the child was registered for home education in the year prior to enrolment in the school, the child has undertaken prep in Queensland or the equivalent in another jurisdiction or the principal is satisfied that the child is ready for schooling in year 1, taking into account the child's social, emotional and developmental attributes. This is a good bill. Having worked on the bill with my fellow committee members, I know that this is good legislation and it should be passed by the House. I am pleased that members on the other side of the House are backing it, because it is for the betterment of our school aged children across the state.

The bill does not lower Queensland's compulsory schooling age. That means that parents will retain the flexibility to delay their child's entry into schooling until the year that the child reaches compulsory school age. However, under the proposed reforms, the child should be enrolled in prep as the first year of schooling. As a parent, I know the importance of that. My oldest child is now a schoolteacher. As his parents, we did not believe that he was ready to start school. We were given great consideration by the education department. As parents, we realised that he was not ready and we held him back a little longer, and he has gone on to bigger and better things within education. He was just not ready to start school at that particular time.

The bill deals with teacher registration. This is also good legislation. I concur with the member for Albert that there have been cases where vexatious complaints have been made against teachers and the cases have dragged on and on. The legislation will give the teachers registration board the power to have such allegations cleared up, allowing the teacher back into the classroom. I agree with the other members of the committee that the safety of our children is paramount. However, we have to remember that, in this modern age of social media and such things, people can make vexatious complaints and ruin a person's reputation very quickly. We have to be mindful of that. I was very happy to be a member of a committee that was very mindful of that. The new teacher registration powers will enable them to act very quickly in such matters. The bill also allows for the recovery of funding from non-government schools. I think that is self-explanatory. We covered that through the committee process.

In summing-up, I support the bill and I commend it to the House. Tomorrow across the state is Teacher Aides Day. I wish all the teacher aides in the Maryborough electorate a great day. They do a fantastic job. I hope they have a happy day. I will be thinking of them tomorrow.