




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (3.32 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that every child in the state receives the full extent of what the schooling system can offer. The Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill does exactly that. When I think about education, I think about a Tibetan proverb that I read many years ago which says that a child without education is like a bird without wings. In 2015 in Queensland, there were 500 children who were not able to start developing the wings of their education. They were the children who did not attend prep. This bill will ensure that all of the state's children will begin developing their wings and will benefit from compulsory prep at the start of 2017.

I commend education minister Kate Jones, the Palaszczuk government and the education committee for taking the initiative to implement compulsory prep for our children and improve the regulation of the teaching profession. Currently for many of us in Queensland prep is still a fairly new concept. Less than 10 years ago many of our children, including my own two, simply attended preschool three times a week, at the most. Under the previous Labor government, a bold step was taken to move Queensland into line with many of the other states of Australia and make prep a reality for our children. That is something that I commend members past and present for establishing.

Prep is an incredibly fundamental part of a child's learning experience and comes at a vitally important age to begin learning. Children who attend prep are given the perfect opportunity to become school ready, to understand what is involved once they move into year 1 and to experience all of it in a safe and friendly environment. Last year's year 7s were the first full prep cohort and the result of that was Queensland's best ever results in reading, spelling and numeracy.

In my electorate of Ipswich, I have the pleasure of representing 20 very diverse schools but without exception fabulous schools that all received excellent NAPLAN results. I make special mention of Blair State School as an excellent example of a school achieving those results. Under the leadership of Principal Peter Lund, this year the year 3 results were the best ever seen at the school and were comparable to the national year 3 cohort of students. Year 3 students at Blair State School have never been comparable to the nation in mean scale score or the upper two bands, until now. That fantastic result is a credit to the school and the staff and I do not hesitate to say that a part of that success is as a result of having students attend prep in the preceding years.

Excellent NAPLAN results are not the only reason for making prep compulsory for our students. International evidence suggests that prep education provides such long-term benefits as higher levels of education completion and employment and reduced rates of mental illness. With all of those benefits, it would appear that the writing is on the wall and prep education is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children when it comes to their education. I am not the only person to commend this action. The President of the Queensland Association of State School Principals, Michael Fay, is on the record as saying that prep gives children the best possible start to their education. By making prep compulsory, we are sending a strong message that prep is a vitally important part of school education. It lays a strong foundation for the primary years that follow and it will allow our children to grow their wings.

While the first year of education is vital, I believe that the people providing education are just as crucial to the development of the state's children. The legislation will provide guidelines to our principals, state and non-state, that they can follow to determine a child's readiness for year 1. Essentially children will not be accepted unless they either have completed prep, undertaken education in another jurisdiction that is equivalent, registered for home education in the year prior to enrolment or the principal is personally satisfied that the child is ready. That will ensure that all of our children are given the best opportunity to engage with their learning and their peers. I will be proud to say that it was our government that ensured this.

Just as starting our children off on the best foot is essential for their learning and education, so too are our teachers. When visiting the many schools in my electorate, I am frequently impressed by the passion and determination that so many of our teachers have. It seems appropriate to add congratulations and a big thank you to all the teacher aides in the Ipswich electorate and wish them a very happy Teacher Aides Day tomorrow. I know that the Palaszczuk government is also aware of the dedication of our teacher aides and teachers, and the importance of our schools.

I commend the government's commitment to the schools in my electorate. This year's budget saw a commitment of \$10.4 million to build new classrooms at Claremont and Ipswich West special schools, on top of another \$400,000 to upgrade the classrooms at Churchill State School, which is the wonderful school that my two children attended many years ago. That school is powering ahead under the leadership of Principal Kelly Harvey. This government's \$16.6 million education investment in the Ipswich electorate will be an invaluable addition to the schools. It will benefit the schools, the students and the teachers, that is, those who put themselves in the firing line.

I am proud that there are many people in the community committed to the lofty goal of teaching and I commend every single teacher who has taught and inspired our children. However, there are occasionally exceptions to the rule when it comes to all professions and teaching is not exempt from that. While the bulk of our teachers are committed to maintaining a high standard of work, there are a small minority who do bring down the reputation of their schools and the profession. Therefore, it is imperative for our government to ensure that teachers are held to the highest standard and that our teachers can and will be disciplined in an efficient manner and held accountable for their actions. Our government will achieve this by improving the regulation of teaching in Queensland, by providing a temporary and streamlined governance structure for the Queensland College of Teachers, and by improving the disciplinary framework and strengthening the ability of the college to protect the safety and wellbeing of all Queensland students.

It is important to note that this government consulted with all stakeholders on these particular amendments and all stakeholders were in agreement with the findings of the committee, without exception. That agreement came about because we understand that the welfare of our children is paramount; it is the most important thing when it comes to making these decisions.

As I have emphasised, school based education is one of the most vital introductions to education and learning. It is here that our children will learn what their passions are, what their desires are and, mostly importantly, shape the kind of people that they want to be. In most situations our children are provided with a teacher or teachers who are equally as passionate, ones driven by a desire to see the children unlock their potential and have the greatest opportunity in life, whether through university, a trade or the many other options. I applaud and congratulate our government for introducing this amendment and for elevating the standards and expectations that we place on our teachers.

One of my great pleasures as the member for Ipswich is working with my school communities. Schools are the cornerstone of our communities and educational reform is the cornerstone of good governance. These amendments proposed by the Palaszczuk government are the sort of changes that will make a tangible difference to the children of Queensland and will ensure that their education is the best it can be. I commend the bill to the House.