




Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGE**

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**EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (3.53 pm): It is a pleasure to rise to speak in support of the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I would like to take this opportunity, and indeed every opportunity, to put on record my appreciation for the contribution that the many passionate principals, teachers and teacher aides make to the pursuit of education in schools, state and non-state, across my electorate.

The primary objectives of the bill are to make the preparatory year the first compulsory year of school education in Queensland; to improve the regulation of teaching in Queensland by streamlining governance, improving the disciplinary framework and strengthening the ability of the Queensland College of Teachers to protect students; to improve the administration of Commonwealth and state funding to non-state schools by establishing statutory arrangements for the recovery of state and Commonwealth funding paid to non-state schools in excess of their entitlements; and to improve oversight of non-state schools by allowing the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board to share information with law enforcement agencies and reduce the collection of unnecessary school survey data.

I note that all members of the parliamentary Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee support the bill. I thank the chair and members of the committee for the time they have taken to consider and report on the bill. The minister and those members who have spoken before me have addressed the policy objectives of the bill in some detail and I do not seek to replicate those comments. Rather, I would like to restrict my remarks specifically to the preparatory year amendments.

I have spoken many times in this House about my passion for education, as someone who has had the benefit of it, who has seen it change the circumstances and opportunities of many, and now as a parent traversing the years of early education with my eldest son currently completing his prep year and my youngest two years away from doing the same. The bill implements the government's commitment to make prep the compulsory first year of school education in Queensland by providing that a state or non-state school principal must not enrol a child in year 1 unless the child has undertaken prep in a state or non-state school in Queensland or in another jurisdiction where the education is equivalent to prep.

Importantly, the bill does not change the age at which a child may be eligible for enrolment in prep or alter the minimum compulsory school age of six years and six months. It provides flexibility for parents to determine whether their child should enter prep in the year they turn five by 30 June or in the following year, to cater for children who may not be developmentally, behaviourally or emotionally ready to commence school based education at the age at which they may be enrolled in prep. This flexibility is something that many parents have told me they want, and I thank the education minister, a mother of two young children herself, for her considered approach in this regard.

Since prep was introduced in 2007, we have seen an improvement in Queensland's NAPLAN results. It was a pleasure to have the Premier and Minister for Education at Virginia State School in my electorate recently to announce and celebrate Queensland's recent positive NAPLAN results.

**Ms Jones:** That's right—your old school.

**Ms LINARD:** Thank you. I take the minister's interjection. Quality early childhood programs make a difference. Evidence indicates that children who participate in such programs gain significant long-term benefits including higher levels of completed education and subsequent employment. This is recognised by most Queensland families, with the vast majority of children undertaking prep before commencing year 1. However, with prep not currently compulsory, there is a small number of children who do not undertake this full-time preparatory year. These children are missing out on the benefits of prep.

It has been a pleasure to see these benefits firsthand in schools across my electorate but also in my own home over the past eight months as my son has absolutely flourished in his prep year. Jordan and his peers' development and mastery under Mr Wilkins—a fabulous teacher—of reading, writing, language—both English and Japanese—mathematics and design, has been extraordinary. He reads independently, passionately explained the virtues of solar power to me last night and just last month made a stop-motion animation video. He also drew on my couch, bit his brother and threw a 40-minute tantrum last week, so he is still a five-year-old, but prep has seen his world and confidence expand exponentially as he prepares for year 1.

This bill ensures that all students reap the benefits of undertaking the prep year of schooling. It was a Labor government that kick-started universal prep in 2007, addressing a great disadvantage for our youngsters—something I as a Labor member in this House am tremendously proud of. The years since have clearly shown just how beneficial a prep year is, with last year's year 7s the first full prep cohort returning their best ever results for reading, spelling and numeracy. Prep gives children the best possible start to their education, and this bill sends a strong message that prep is a vitally important part of school education, laying a strong foundation for the primary years which follow.

The bill also strengthens the Queensland College of Teachers' powers to suspend a teacher's registration to keep our children safe. The bill makes significant amendments to the regulation of the teaching profession to strengthen the ability of the Queensland College of Teachers to act in the best interests of children, to protect the safety and wellbeing of Queensland students and to maintain public confidence in the teaching profession. It will provide a contemporary and more streamlined governance structure for the college and improve the teacher disciplinary framework. Accordingly, I commend the bill to the House.