




Speech By
Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (3.23 pm): I rise to speak to the debate on the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. I would particularly like to refer to report No. 14 of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee. I note that the committee did some very good work in examining this bill. In doing that work they were able to reach the conclusion that the committee recommends that the bill be passed. That was a unanimous recommendation, despite some of the contributions from those opposite having some reservations in respect of some parts of the bill, which I will get to in a moment.

I note that the purposes of the bill, the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill, which are set out in the explanatory notes, are to implement the Queensland Labor government's policy objectives of making prep the compulsory first year of school education in Queensland; improving the regulation of the teaching profession in Queensland, including by providing a contemporary and streamlined governance structure for the Queensland College of Teachers and improving the disciplinary framework and strengthening the ability of the college to protect the safety and wellbeing of Queensland students; introducing a statutory debt recovery mechanism to recover state and Commonwealth funding paid to non-state schools in excess of their entitlement; and strengthening the oversight of non-state schools by enabling the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board to disclose relevant information with law enforcement agencies and reduce red tape for non-state schools by reducing requirements for the provision of school survey data.

I firstly acknowledge the outstanding work done by teachers in our schools in Queensland. I particularly want to pay tribute to the teachers in the Morayfield state electorate who go above and beyond in caring for the students in their classrooms, in their schools, but also for giving those kids the flying start that they need to achieve their potential. In acknowledging all of those people who contribute to the welfare, wellbeing and outcomes that our young people in the Morayfield state electorate will achieve because of the quality education that they get through our schools, particularly our public schools, I acknowledge the teacher aides in the Morayfield state electorate ahead of Teacher Aide Day tomorrow. I would particularly like to thank them for their contributions to the Morayfield state electorate schools.

It was a Labor government that introduced prep in 2007. I have some great memories of attending prep classrooms during my first term in government. One was with the then parliamentary secretary to the minister for education, Peta-Kaye Croft, who is a former member for Broadwater. We were at the Burpengary Meadows State School in one of their prep classrooms and we were reading some books with the children. I remember this little girl—she is in prep so she would be 4½ to five years old—went over to the bookshelf and grabbed a book. She came over and plonked the book down in front of me and said, 'I'm going to read this to you.' The words in this book were huge words, I thought, for a 4½-year-old. I do not think I could have read them at 4½; I do not think I could read them now! There were words like 'caterpillar' and 'butterfly' and she was reading this book with such confidence. At that

moment I knew that the investment that the Labor government was making in education in Queensland was worthwhile because that little prep girl had so much confidence picking up that book. The thrill that she had with reading and learning overwhelmed me.

That tradition of Labor governments investing in education continues to this day. We see that today with this bill before the parliament making prep universally the compulsory first year of schooling for our young people here in Queensland. Prep has been well received and taken up in Queensland. I note that the statistics show that 98 per cent of all year 1 students attended a year of schooling before commencing in year 1. The number of children who may miss out on the benefits of prep at the moment is around 500. We know that by exposing our children to structured learning and educational opportunities earlier they have better outcomes in life—they have better academic outcomes in life, they have better life outcomes. We know that by passing this bill today we will encourage more young people into prep and ensure that they too have those academic outcomes. It is very important that we continue to invest in education and our young people to ensure that our young people do have a flying start to their education and a flying start to life.

I want to touch briefly on improving teacher registration in Queensland, particularly around the matter of disciplinary action. We have been hearing some contributions from those opposite about vexatious claims and how that might somehow be influenced by the passing of this bill today.

Ms Davis: The Teachers' Union was concerned.

Mr RYAN: No. If you look at the submission, all stakeholders—

Ms Davis interjected.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! I ask members to direct their comments through the chair, please.

Mr RYAN: It is interesting that the shadow minister seeks to interject, because all stakeholders support the bill and her members on the committee support the bill. If they had any problems with it, they should have expressed that in a statement of reservations in the report. Unanimous is unanimous. Unanimous means that you support the provisions of the bill. To come in here and use some weasel words now is a pretty ordinary way of treating the committee process.

The fact of the matter is that all we have to do is look at the bill and the explanatory notes. There are sufficient safeguards in this bill to ensure that matters that require disciplinary action are investigated appropriately. The really important point is that, if a matter is raised for investigation, the college must have a reasonable belief before taking disciplinary action. That prevents the college from acting on rumour or innuendo. A safeguard is built in. Therefore, it is a fairly ordinary approach for those opposite to try to use some weasel words to create some sort of hysteria around vexatious claims, when in their submissions the stakeholders express support for the bill and members opposite express support for the bill through the committee's report.

The final matter I want to touch on is cutting red tape for the non-state school sector. The proposed amendments will ensure that there is improved data collection and reduced red tape on the non-state school sector. Also, and this is really important, the oversight body, the Non-State School Accreditation Board, will now have the ability to disclose matters to law enforcement agencies. That is really important when we talk about not only ensuring compliance with the law but also creating a culture of compliance with the law. It is very important that our non-state school sector has that oversight and also the reduced red tape that will arise from this bill.

I am very pleased to support the bill. I wish to acknowledge the hard work of the committee in preparing their report and, of course, the hard work of the education minister, who is a passionate supporter of education in Queensland and a great advocate for our young people. She is an advocate who will ensure that our young people in schools all over Queensland get the best start in life, a flying start to their education. I support the bill.