




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

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EDUCATION (ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS) BILL

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (4.01 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2017. I would like to thank the committee for their consideration of this bill. I wish to specifically thank the member for Broadwater, who is a member of that committee, and also the member for Aspley, who travelled out to St George to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association conference in St George. Not only did they have the opportunity to meet with many from the non-state schools sector at the ICPA conference; they also had the opportunity to sample some of the roads and distances in my electorate and perhaps the lack of signage on one road in particular.

Ms Davis: We got there.

Ms LEAHY: We did get there. We also had a wonderful visit to the Surat State School, a P-10 school, and also the Wallumbilla State School. I must say I have quite a few dirt roads in between a lot of those schools in my electorate. I was disappointed that none of the elected members of the government actually chose to come out to the ICPA conference in St George this year. There were many members from the non-state school sector at that conference as well as many distance education schools and parents.

The bill results from a review of the current act which began back in 2014 under the LNP when in government with a view to modernising and streamlining the non-state school accreditation. Both the current act and the bill require non-state schools to be accredited by a board and make it an offence to operate a non-state school without that accreditation. Whilst we are talking about non-state schools, I would also like to pay tribute to the non-state schools in my electorate. There are quite a number that will fall under the jurisdiction of this legislation. In Cunnamulla there is the Sacred Heart Primary School, which was established in 1915 and was originally staffed by the Sisters of Mercy, an Irish order founded by Catherine McAuley in 1827.

Miss Barton interjected.

Ms LEAHY: Yes. In Charleville St Mary's School was opened in 1913 by the Sisters of Mercy at the request of the local Catholic families and they are still going strong under the stewardship of Principal Louise Pflugst. These two schools have been providing education in my electorate for over a hundred years. Any reduction in the regulatory burden brought about by this bill on these schools' governing body is most welcome.

In St George St Patrick's School was founded by the sisters of St Joseph and was officially blessed and opened on 19 February 1933. It was originally named St Joseph's convent although today St Pat's is known by the name St Patrick's School in St George.

At Tara there is St Joseph's Primary School, a prep to year 6 coeducational school. I was delighted to join St Joseph's for their golden jubilee. It is really interesting when we attend these celebrations because there are often a few stories about the cane. I met with what might have been the

first student of St Joseph's in Tara. He used to hide the cane under the steps of the school so the teachers could not find it to use it. Maybe he had good reason for hiding it.

At Chinchilla we have St Joseph's School which began as a parish school staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph in 1923. I was delighted to join St Joseph's for their Anzac Day ceremony. The school is an absolute credit to principal Aaron Wells, his staff and the parents. Aaron and his wife, Pamela, are no stranger to principal work across the electorate of Warrego because originally he was the principal at Quilpie and he has now moved to St Joey's.

The Chinchilla Christian College, which unfortunately copped a few hailstorms at Chinchilla, was established in 1928 by a group of local Christian parents who had a vision for Christian education in the area. In recent years the college has undergone dramatic growth and in 2014 the college applied for and received accreditation to commence secondary education to year 12. The secondary school currently has students to year 11. I was delighted to join the Chinchilla Christian School community for the opening of their new classroom block. What a pleasure it has been to see that school grow in Chinchilla.

That brings to me some of the complexities in this legislation. If we have a look at the school community at the Chinchilla Christian College we see that they made a contribution of some \$440,000 to that particular classroom block and the state and federal governments contributed \$260,000 each. I am looking here for a clarification in relation to what the bill says about the operation for profit. Obviously the school had to operate for some time with some sort of perception of profit to raise that contribution of nearly half a million dollars worth of funds and they had to hold those funds until such time as they could source sufficient state and federal funding. No doubt there would be a perception that the school might be operating for profit, especially if they have to hold the funds while they go through the processes of sourcing state and federal funding contributions. I would appreciate if the minister could clarify whether in the circumstances where schools have to hold that money—it was nearly half a million dollars that they had to raise for this classroom block—there are not any unintended consequences from clause 7. I do note that the government has proposed some amendments. I would like to hear the minister's clarification on this matter because it does take time for school communities to raise that sort of money and then source the state and federal government contributions.

At Roma we have St John's School, which was established by the Sisters of Mercy in 1881 and provides education from prep to year 12. I am proud to say that members of my family are past students of St John's School at Roma.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to non-state schools that will be joining the Warrego electorate following the electoral redistribution. They are the Dalby Christian College, which was established in 1981, and Our Lady of the Southern Cross College, which is a prep to year 12 college in Dalby. Also the member for Gregory mentioned St Finbarr's School at Quilpie, which will be joining the Warrego electorate. I note that the former member for Gregory, Vaughan Johnson, is a past student of St Finbarr's School as well.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the principals, teachers and support staff of all the non-government schools and also the government schools for their dedication to students and education right across my electorate. I really do congratulate the parent communities for the support they give these schools. I commend the bill to the House.