




Speech By  
**Bruce Saunders**

**MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH**

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Record of Proceedings, 10 August 2017

**EDUCATION (ACCREDITATION OF NON-STATE SCHOOLS) BILL**

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (12.27 pm): I rise to give my support to the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill 2017. I would like to thank the chair and deputy chair of the committee and the members of the committee—the members for Albert, Hervey Bay, Pumicestone and me. It is a great committee. This is a very good bill. I would like to thank the Minister for Education for doing a fantastic job in this state of Queensland. As we all know, education is key to lifting the standard of living and improving communities. That is what the Palaszczuk government and the minister have been doing.

I agree with my colleagues on the committee about private schools. Everyone else has been giving a plug to their private schools, so I will take a leaf out of the book of the members for Broadwater, Hervey Bay, Townsville et cetera to talk about my schools. St Mary's in Maryborough is a fantastic primary and high school. The principal of St Mary's College is Graham Meertens. Graham is a fantastic man and so are the teachers and staff. It is a great school. I go to all their open days. The school opened on 3 September 1888 and it is still going now. St Mary's in Maryborough has been around a long, long time. It started off with the Christian Brothers and in 1979 it amalgamated with the Sisters of Mercy and became St Mary's. It has turned out many great citizens in my electorate, and it is a very good school.

Catholic schools all around Queensland provide a top education and they do a tremendous job for communities from Cape York right down to the border. I agree with the member for Hervey Bay: I do not think the public realise the important job these schools play in the community in what they do and how they turn out great students right across-the-board.

Another school I have in Maryborough is Riverside college, which is a great independent school. Anne O'Brien is the principal there and she is a fantastic lady. That school has grown to over 800 students, and it also has a great distance education policy which has grown dramatically over the years. The school started with about 40 students and over the years it has grown to over 880 at the moment. It is a fantastic school with great education outcomes. When we see the students in these schools and what they can do, we are proud to say that we represent that community. These schools turn out some great students.

It was great that the minister listened to the committee and changed the bill. This is what happens when we have a government that listens to people. There were changes, and this is what can happen with recommendations from a committee. I would like to thoroughly congratulate the minister for doing that because the minister did listen to the committee. We had a lot of input from stakeholders and I listened to them and their points of view. We had some really good briefings and talks on the bill and we listened to the stakeholders who came and addressed the committee. The standard of education in Queensland is high because of these very dedicated people. They are dedicated not only to their schools but also to the students and the parents who attend them.

Like the member for Townsville said, I think we are in pretty safe hands going forward with some of the students, teachers, principals and people on the different boards. We are in very good hands

moving forward because these people are looking after the education of our state. It was interesting to listen to some of the stakeholders. As a committee, we discussed the bill and I believe we have come up with a very good bill.

As other speakers have said today, when we go out into the community, people say to us, 'All we hear is that politicians fight, argue and carry on,' but the education minister put this bill to the House, the committee went through it, it went back to the minister and she has listened, and I believe we have a great bill now that moves forward with the education for this state. It has been said many times today that everyone on both sides of the House wants the best for students in schools to make sure they get the best education so they can improve their lives or do what they want to do in life. As the member for Townsville said, we are not getting any younger so we have to make sure we look after these younger students coming through and give them the right education and the right bill because, as we age, they are the ones who could be our future brain surgeons or doctors operating on us. We need to make sure they are educated well.

**Mr Stewart** interjected.

**Mr SAUNDERS:** I will take that interjection from the member for Townsville. We have to get it right. Being an ex-principal, you know how crucial education is to the young people of our state and to our future. Education is the backbone of the way we are going to move forward here. We know that jobs will change over the next few years. There will be jobs that go and new jobs will come that we have never heard of. With a changing work environment, we have to make sure that our students are educated to move forward with the new economies, with the digital interruption, as they call it, with STEM and with everything like that. We have to make sure that our young ones are educated.

I believe we are doing a great job in Queensland in educating the youth and moving them forward and getting them ready for the new economy. There will be a lot of changes in the new economy that a lot of older people will not come to terms with because it will be completely different. It will be like the Industrial Revolution that happened in England which turned England on its head. With the digital interruption that is coming, we have to make sure that our students are educated and ready to embrace the new economy. This is very important. I know both sides of the House want to make sure that our students are educated and ready to move forward for the new economy.

The schools have changed a lot since I went to school. When I went to school, we were interested in football and cricket. Our education came last on some days because it was more interesting to play a game of Rugby League, cricket, tennis or whatever we wanted to play. In the swimming season, we would go to the pool. We would make sure we got our exercise in, or we would hide under the building for a couple of hours so we did not have to attend class. It is a different world today, and that is why we have to make sure the future of our state and nation is educated well.

I am proud to be part of the education committee and proud to be part of a government that is putting a record amount of funding into education. It is the biggest budget we have ever had in this state and that shows the government understands that education is the key to moving this state forward. It is great to see that we are getting some great results in NAPLAN and things like that from the money we are spending across this state on education.

I would like to thank the members of the committee, the secretariat and the staff who put a lot of hours in. I especially thank all of the stakeholders who came in and spoke to us. The education minister and her staff were always there to answer questions. If there was anything we wanted to know, they were very amicable and would talk to us to make sure we had the right information so we could make the right decision for Queenslanders. This is what it is all about. It is about the right decision for Queenslanders. I would like to once again thank the chair and the deputy chair for their fine leadership on this committee and how they directed the committee. I thank everyone who was involved. I commend the bill to the House.