



Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 11 May 2017

EDUCATION, TOURISM, INNOVATION AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE

Report, Motion to Take Note

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.34 am): I move—

That the House takes note of the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee report No. 30 titled *Early childhood education: implementation of the recommendations in the Auditor-General's report No. 19 2015-16* tabled on 24 March 2017.

It gives me great pleasure to stand in this House and speak about something I am very passionate about. I think there is only one thing I am more passionate about than education and that is Townsville. We had great successes last night with Townsville Enterprise, and I thank them for their work. In speaking to this report, I doubt there is a single person in this House who has not been to a local school and spent some time in a classroom. Every single person in this House appreciates the importance of education.

Ms Jones: Hear, hear!

Mr STEWART: There is no more important component of education than early childhood education because it really sets those foundation stones. I particularly take the interjections and the mad and profuse nodding by the Minister for Education—

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Farmer): Order! Member for Townsville, could I ask you to move the motion before you proceed please?

Mr STEWART: I did, but I am happy to do it all again.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am sorry. We were having some discussion here and we thought you had not. I beg your pardon.

Ms Jones: You're all over it, aren't you?

Mr STEWART: I am right on top of it, and the minister will certainly agree with me that the cornerstone of great education is the work that is done in early childhood education, particularly knowing that this week is NAPLAN testing week. It is a very important week. A number of students would certainly be very stressed this week. There are a number of parents on both sides of the House who would certainly understand the stresses that kids go through. However, we should bear in mind that NAPLAN testing is purely looking at where the gaps are in students' learning so that appropriate actions can be taken.

When it comes to early childhood education we know that 70 per cent of what children learn is learnt in the first five years of their life. It is absolutely critical that we get the early childhood education component right.

Ms Boyd: Hear, hear!

Mr STEWART: I take the interjection from the member for Pine Rivers behind me. The work that our teachers do in early childhood education is absolutely critical. They do an outstanding job every single day. I take my hat off to them. I have worked with a number of them across our state and they are absolutely brilliant in the work that they do. I cannot speak highly enough of them.

The background to this report is that the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education was agreed to by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments in February 2009. The outcomes that were designed based on the partnership agreement are that all children have access to an affordable, quality early childhood education in the years before they start formal schooling. One of the other critical components here is that all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote Indigenous communities will have access to a quality early childhood education program.

Queensland received \$388 million from the national partnership agreement between 2009-10 and 2014-15. Unfortunately, we heard in this week's federal budget that the Turnbull government does not have the same consideration for education. While they boast and beat their chest loudly about how much money they are putting into education, it was not backed up. When that surface is scratched away, we are actually going to be receiving less. Yesterday the Minister for Education highlighted in her speech to parliament that all Queensland schools will receive \$300 million less right across our state over the next 10 years because of the cuts to education. That is absolutely appalling when we know that early childhood education is critical, critical, critical.

Ms Boyd: It is vitally important.

Mr STEWART: I take the interjection. It is absolutely critical and vital to make sure we get those foundation steps. The Auditor-General's findings were that in 2015 Queensland's kindergarten participation rate for early childhood education was 96.4 per cent for all four-year-olds, and that is in fact greater than the national target of 95 per cent. That is 2.5 times more than the participation rate in 2010. I commend the report to the House.