




Speech By  
**Scott Stewart**

**MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE**

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

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (11.56 am): Today I rise to speak in support of the Education (Accreditation of Non-State Schools) Bill as the chair of the education committee. Firstly, I thank the secretariat staff for all of the work that they did in putting together the research for this bill. I recognise the committee members from both sides of the House. The bill was agreed to unanimously. It was great to work together on this one. I acknowledge all of the stakeholders who made submissions and came to the public hearings to present their perspectives. From that, we were able to develop a small number of amendments that have been taken on board by the Minister for Education.

We have heard the member for Aspley say how proud she is of the non-government schools in her electorate. I believe I can safely say, with hand on heart, that every single member in this House is proud of the work that the non-government and government schools do in our communities, because we know that to invest in education is to investment in our future. I want to make sure that I have done absolutely everything that I can for the kids, because one day one of those kids may be looking after me, so I want to make sure that I did it right, right from the get-go. One day I may live in an old-age home and I do not want to hear the words, 'Remember me, Mr Stewart? I'm going to get you back!'

I will take a leaf out of the book of the member for Aspley. She gave a free kick to a couple of her schools and I will do exactly the same thing. St Patrick's College on The Strand and, in particular, Principal Paulina Skerman are doing an absolutely sensational job. Ms Skerman is really driving the students hard and they have achieved some outstanding and excellent results in NAPLAN this year. Earlier in the year we were fortunate to have the member for Algester attend a school assembly. The students sang a welcome to country, which was a very moving and emotional experience. Things such as that showcase the talent of students in each and every one of our schools.

I would also like to give a free kick to St Margaret Mary's College, and particularly the principal, Kathy Park, who is doing an outstanding job with her students. Every time I go into my schools—and I am sure I can say this for every member in the House—I am welcomed and the schools love displaying the outstanding work they are doing. They are proud of the work they are doing with their kids.

We have already heard from the Minister for Education that investing in our schools, and particularly the early years, is key. As a government we are investing \$10.6 million to support access to vital early education, family support and maternal health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families through Queensland's children and family centres. That is investment in the future. We are partnering with the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health to promote the importance of early childhood education in 18 locations across the south-east corner through the Deadly Kindies program. That is an investment in education. This week the minister has introduced a new bill into this House.

Through this year's budget we are investing \$27.6 million this year or \$72.9 million over five years to implement the new senior assessment and tertiary entrance systems for students entering year 11 from 2019. That will have an impact on students not only in government schools but also across the non-government sector. It is great to be part of a government that makes sure we are doing everything we can to get the best outcomes for students right across Queensland.

This bill simplifies the non-state school accreditation process by removing provisional accreditation and the issuing of accreditation certificates. It also provides for decisions about eligibility for non-state school funding to be made by the board rather than by the Non-State Schools Eligibility for Government Funding Committee as is the case under the current act and for automatic eligibility for accredited schools operating on a not-for-profit basis. The bill also provides that the board is responsible for monitoring compliance within the act and gives powers to authorised officers to facilitate this function. Finally, this bill provides for the independent review of decisions by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, QCAT.

This bill is about reducing red tape. It is also about empowering the functions of the board with regard to these schools. The bill provides three new functions for the board: to assess and decide applications in relation to whether governing bodies are still eligible for government funding; to monitor and enforce compliance within the act; and to conduct investigations about contraventions of or noncompliance with the act.

The submitters basically said to the committee that these are great changes which they welcome, except for clause 7. They identified that there could be some key issues with clause 7 and the meaning of 'operating for profit'. I note that the minister has stood up in this House today and explained what the amendment will look like that addresses those concerns. I congratulate the minister for doing that. The role of committees is to scrutinise bills before the House to make sure the legislation meets the needs of people and is squeaky clean. That is exactly what has happened in this case. I congratulate the minister for foreshadowing those amendments. I commend the bill to the House.