




Speech By
Barbara O'Shea

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

 **Dr O'SHEA** (South Brisbane—ALP) (6.23 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. One of the most important gifts we can give our children is the opportunity to access a good education where their natural abilities are encouraged to grow and flourish. A good education can be life-changing and this best occurs in an environment suited to the individual child, whether that is through traditional schooling or home education. We should be very proud of our education system in Queensland, whether it is the state, Catholic, independent or home education sector. My three sons were privileged to attend Brisbane State High School in my electorate of South Brisbane.

In addressing this education bill, I take the opportunity to recognise and thank all of our teachers and the support and administration staff who provide such an important learning environment for our children. I particularly pay tribute to our hardworking teachers, who not only have a heavy workload but also are often subjected to verbal and physical abuse from students or their parents. That is not acceptable in any workplace and should not be tolerated in our schools. Our teachers should be supported and celebrated for their integral role in developing the minds and character of our future generations.

As a new member of parliament, one of my most pleasant roles has been meeting with the inspirational principals in the schools in my electorate, attending parent and citizen meetings with the volunteers who work so hard to fundraise and support their schools as well as having the opportunity to talk with our school students at their schools or when they visit this House. I am always impressed by their level of knowledge about our state legislative body and how engaged they are with the democratic process.

I make special mention of the role of school libraries in our children's lives. These are not only places that can stimulate a lifelong love of reading in our children; for many children the calm and peaceful environment of the school library often serves as an essential respite from the demands of a long school day. Our school libraries play a vital role in the daily life of many of our students. I hope that, with the increasing reliance on online resources, their importance is recognised and school libraries are supported and maintained.

In addressing this bill, I acknowledge the work of the Education, Arts and Communities Committee, the submitters who provided contributions and the hard work of the secretariat in supporting the committee in its review of this proposed legislation. This bill proposes to amend the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 and other legislation to reduce the regulatory burden on schools, parents and students in a range of areas.

An important amendment contained in this bill extends the age eligibility of students in home education. I note that these provisions attracted the majority of submissions to the inquiry. Under the current legislation, students are only eligible to be registered for home education until the end of the year in which they turn 17. This bill proposes extending registration for a further 12 months, to the end of the year in which the student turns 18, to bring home educated students in line with their peers who

attend state and non-state schools. The bill also extends the eligibility for student related financial supports, educational resources, travel and participation in sporting competitions in line with this new timeframe to ensure that all students have the same opportunities to support their development.

A number of submitters advocated a further extension of the registration period beyond 18 years in cases where the students may have had a delayed start to their education, repeated a year of schooling or have special circumstances or learning requirements. In response to this, the committee recommended further consideration around the extension of the age eligibility of students in home education by another six months, to the end of the year in which the student turns 18 years and six months.

Another important amendment in this bill relates to the timely and effective sharing of relevant student information between schools. Currently, when a student moves between state and non-state schools, the student, the parent or the principal of the new school can request a student transfer note from the former school. This transfer note includes relevant information about the student's educational performance, any support provided, behaviour and attendance as well as any medical issues. In 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse made a number of recommendations regarding strengthening information-sharing arrangements for the safety and welfare of children. Those recommendations included the transfer of a student's relevant information when they started a new school to assist the new school in meeting the student's safety and wellbeing needs as well as those of the other students in the school. Under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006, the provision of transfer notes is currently optional. This bill proposes to make transfer notes mandatory, requiring the principal of a state or non-state school to request a transfer note within 90 days of a student enrolling at their school. Once requested, the transfer note will be required to be provided to the new school within 10 school days.

Although deemed outside the scope of this bill, the committee acknowledged the issues raised by stakeholders in relation to school disciplinary absences, SDAs. These included requests for a comprehensive review of SDAs, the consideration of holistic models of supports in schools and proposals that suspensions and exclusions be implemented strictly as a last resort, safeguarding the educational rights and wellbeing of Queensland students, particularly those with disabilities. I support the amendments contained in this bill and I support the passage of the bill.

Debate, on motion of Dr O'Shea, adjourned.