



Speech By
Charis Mullen

MEMBER FOR JORDAN

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EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

 **Ms MULLEN** (Jordan—ALP) (7.59 pm): I rise to contribute to the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. The bill seeks to amend the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 with the objective of reducing the regulatory burden and red tape on schools, parents and students.

We know that our Queensland teachers are bearing the brunt of increasing workloads, red tape and occupational violence in our schools, as well as the parental expectations that are being placed on them. In term 2 of every year since I became the member for Jordan I have met individually with each of my school principals, not only in the public school system but also in our independent schools. They are really valuable discussions. We spend a lot of time together and I find out a lot about what is happening in each of my schools. This is the first year in a long time that even my most enthusiastic school principals have told me just how challenging the school environment is at this time. We probably did not need to know that from our principals. We have heard it and seen it from the more than 50,000 teachers who went on strike for the first time in 16 years to say that they need more support.

The LNP government and the education minister promised they would fix this by reducing red tape by 25 per cent. Despite this, we hoped there would be more—12 months in of this government, we thought there would be more in terms of red-tape relief that they so desperately needed. Instead, the presented bill really is nothing but a copy of Labor's homework. They have made a couple of minor changes, hoping the teachers would not notice and crossing their fingers for a passing grade.

We appreciate the vote of confidence from the minister in the work of the former Labor government—we really do. This bill proposes several changes adopted from the previous Labor bill. However, I want to particularly focus on the proposed amendments to home education in Queensland. Homeschooling is a growing part of Queensland's education mix, and we have seen an increased uptake by families who are providing children with an alternative education pathway to the more mainstream schooling environments. The Department of Education reported that from 2019 to 2023 there had been a 260 per cent increase in students enrolled through home education, underlining the importance that the legislation be amended to better reflect this increasingly more common reality.

Only this week, along with the assistant shadow minister for education, the member for Mount Ommaney, I attended the homeschool market day in Springfield, where homeschooled children and young people from across South-East Queensland gather to sell their handmade arts and crafts. It is more than just a stall. The students are learning valuable lessons around entrepreneurship, business, marketing, organisation, responsibility and, most importantly, confidence in themselves.

This yearly event is organised by the dynamic Bec Mullen—no relation—who runs the Greater Springfield Home Schoolers group. I have been attending this event for a number of years. As an MP, I have taken the time to engage with my homeschooling community to better understand the decisions that families make when it comes to homeschooling their children and the issues they face. I know from many families that the decision to homeschool does not feel like a choice but a necessity for their child's academic growth, their wellbeing and their happiness. As a parent myself, I know that is what I want for my children and I respect the decisions that families make for theirs.

What I have seen, and I really want to acknowledge, is that mothers are predominantly bearing the responsibility of homeschooling their children. Many give up successful careers to do this. I want to recognise that. In particular, I want to acknowledge Amanda and Patricia from free2homeschool, who are here this evening. These are amazing women. They are incredible mothers and they are such passionate advocates for homeschooling families across our state. I am so pleased that they are here tonight.

The significant growth in homeschooling, especially following COVID-19, was the reason that our then government embarked on a review of homeschooling provisions. I want to echo the words of the member for Logan, who said, 'Yes, I don't think we got it right at the time when we put out some initial proposals.' I had a meeting with a number of my homeschooling families. I was very grateful that department representatives came out to my electorate for a meeting with many of the families to explain some of the measures that were being proposed. Those discussions were so valuable for the department. What I think became very evident was that the Home Education Unit within the department was simply not keeping up with the growth and the demands of this education option.

I acknowledge the former education minister, the member for Bulimba, because she really listened. She listened to homeschooling families. She listened to MPs who went and saw her and said, 'Look, I just I don't think this is the way to go. We need to do more work in this space and address the concerns.' The minister established the Home Education Expert Group, and their personal experiences were vital to informing how the homeschooling sector is regulated and advanced.

One of the key proposed changes in the bill is to extend the current age eligibility requirements for home education registrations from 17 years old to 31 December in the year the student turns 18. That maintains eligibility for student related financial supports and education resources, mending the current discrepancy that left 18-year-old home education students without the same supports as their state and private school education peers in the same circumstances.

We know how important it is for all students to be involved and to have the same opportunities. We know that this provision is largely supported by stakeholders who provided feedback on this bill and the former Labor government's bill. I note the comments of the Queensland Family and Child Commission in their submission to the committee. They stated—

This reform will allow students to complete their final year of schooling in a manner that best suits their needs, which is especially important for those who may face challenges in traditional school settings or need additional time to reach academic milestones.

The Home Education Association Queensland chapter, Australia's peak homeschooling association, further outlined the benefits in their submission. They stated—

Some benefits that result from increasing the age limit are:

- Access to additional education opportunities such as traineeships, apprenticeships, Vocational Education and Training with RTOs or TAFE at School, and Uni at School ...
- Ability to participate in school-based competitions and challenges as home-educating students, such as arts, STEM and geography competitions ...
- Ability to participate in District and Regional Sports ...
- Access to needed financial support—

that was a real big one—

Increasing the age of registration enables families to continue receiving assistance in the form of eligible Centrelink payments and, for some, the Assistance for Isolated Children allowance ...

I want to acknowledge the many parents of homeschooling children who also made submissions to the committee expressing their support. It was their extensive stakeholder feedback that informed our approach to homeschooling. We read their submissions and listened to what they had to say, as we intended when we announced the review in 2024.

Labor supports this bill because it is, frankly, our bill reheated and served up by a lazy government that has repeatedly demonstrated that it lacks the care and passion our schools and students deserve. This side of the House will continue to work with teachers, P&Cs and home education stakeholders to ensure their needs are listened to, and we will hold the government to account to deliver on their promises.