



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR TOOHEY

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EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2025

 **Mr RUSSO** (Toohey—ALP) (6.02 pm): I rise to speak in relation to the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025. At the outset it is important to acknowledge that this bill closely mirrors the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill previously introduced by the former Labor government which lapsed upon the dissolution of the 57th Parliament. Indeed, most of the amendments now before us were included in that earlier version. However, there are some notable differences. Several provisions dealing with behaviour management and enhanced regulation of the homeschooling sector, originally part of the lapsed bill, are absent from the current version. Their omission raises questions about the government's priorities, particularly when issues of behaviour management and home education remain live topics in the Queensland education system.

The bill proposes a range of significant changes to the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006. These include streamlining special school transfers, removing the requirement for students already enrolled at one special school to undergo a fresh assessment before transferring to another; mandatory transfer notes in that, in direct response to the 2017 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, principals will now be required to obtain transfer notes within 90 days of enrolment; extension of home education registration eligibility, increasing the age threshold for home education registration from 17 to 18 years by the end of 2025; online service access and student data, creating a framework to allow Department of Education employees to record, use and disclose student information relevant to approved online services; disaster recovery support, permitting the donation of physical materials, not just money, between parents and citizens' associations and schools following natural disasters; allowing for multiple-campus P&Cs, allowing schools with multiple campuses to establish individual P&C associations; P&C executive eligibility, preventing individuals convicted of indictable offences from serving on P&C executive committees; and delegation of suspension communications, enabling principals to delegate the communication of suspensions to authorised staff such as deputy principals or heads of department. Collectively, these measures are designed to modernise Queensland's education legislation, improve access and reduce unnecessary administrative burdens.

The changes around special school transfers and mandatory transfer notes are particularly significant. They will help ensure schools are equipped with relevant information to support vulnerable or at-risk students. However, these provisions must be implemented with utmost sensitivity and respect for privacy. Transfer notes, for example, can contain deeply personal information. It is critical that they are handled in a way that protects confidentiality and avoids any risk of stigma or discrimination.

The minister, in introducing this bill, referenced the term 'reduce' no fewer than 15 times, particularly in the context of reducing administrative burdens for principals, teachers, parents and students. Despite this rhetoric, there is no clear explanation of how these measures align with the minister's charter letter KPI of achieving a 25 per cent reduction in red tape. During the public briefing, opposition members confirmed with the department that no specific metrics exist—nor are there any planned—to measure how the proposed amendments will contribute to that 25 per cent target. Furthermore, the baseline from which this 25 per cent reduction is to be measured has not been established.

In truth, the bill introduces no new red-tape-reduction initiatives. However, it continues the non-legislative reforms previously identified by the former Labor government. While there is much rhetoric, there remains little tangible progress in delivering genuine reform. Meanwhile, teachers across Queensland continue to struggle under the weight of increasing workloads, red tape and occupational violence—issues that Premier Crisafulli promised to fix but which are nowhere to be found in this bill. Just a few weeks ago more than 50,000 Queensland teachers went on strike for the first time in 16 years to say that this government is not doing enough to support them. That should have been a wake-up call. Instead, the government has presented a bill that ignores the daily realities teachers face in classrooms across this state.

One of the most significant aspects of this bill is the streamlining of student access to online services. In today's digital age, it is essential that students can seamlessly access modern educational tools. This bill supports that goal, but it also raises serious concerns about data privacy and cybersecurity. Both the Queensland Teachers' Union and the Independent Education Union of Australia have underscored the need for stringent protections around student data. They have called for clear limits on the types of data shared; strict rules around data storage, duration, purpose and access; and civil penalties for online service providers whose actions cause harm. The Office of the Information Commissioner has recognised the department's good intentions but stressed the importance of stronger safeguards, including privacy-by-design principles and privacy impact assessments. Similarly, PeakCare Queensland supports the intent of these reforms but recommends the department's annual report include updates on data protections, breaches and their management.

The Queensland Law Society has also raised concerns, noting that privacy is just one issue among many. The terms and conditions of online platforms often include liability waivers and provisions about intellectual property rights. The bill does not address these issues, nor does it clarify student ownership of creative works or coding matters that are increasingly relevant to older students. These are legitimate concerns and deserve serious attention.

The bill clarifies eligibility for eKindy—Queensland's distance education program for kindy-aged children—ensuring those who are geographically isolated or medically unable to attend in person are not excluded. This is a commendable, inclusive reform that keeps early education accessible to all Queensland children, regardless of their circumstances.

Alongside the headline reforms, the bill also contains a number of minor and technical amendments to improve the operational effectiveness of Queensland's education legislation. These may not attract much attention, but they are nonetheless important for ensuring a responsive and modern system. While there is broad stakeholder support for the objectives of this bill, deep concerns around implementation and accountability remain. The Queensland Teachers' Union and the Independent Education Union support the intent of data-sharing reforms but question whether the safeguards are adequate. The Office of the Information Commissioner has called for stronger protections and oversight. The Queensland Law Society has warned that intellectual property rights and liability issues are being overlooked. PeakCare Queensland has urged the government to improve transparency through annual reporting. These concerns cannot be brushed aside. They go to the heart of protecting students, staff and school communities.

The Education (General Provisions) Amendment Bill 2025 represents a step forward in modernising Queensland's education system. It seeks to reduce red tape, streamline digital access, improve administrative practices and strengthen student protections. Labor supports this bill because, quite frankly, the minister has copied our work. He has taken the bill that lapsed under the former government, made a few minor changes and delivered none of his own KPIs. We know this Premier has a habit of breaking promises but, in this case, his bad habit means Queensland's teachers and students are collateral damage.