




Speech by
Saxon Rice

MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA

Hansard Wednesday, 14 November 2012

EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs RICE** (Mount Coot-tha—LNP) (5.10 pm): I rise to make a short contribution in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As we have heard, the bill has four key objectives. They are: to enable state schools of distance education to deliver an e-kindy program to eligible children; to allow Queensland to adopt new national professional standards for teachers; to ensure that teachers who fail to report likely future sexual abuse of a student will not be subject to criminal sanctions; and to replace the requirement that students permanently excluded from state schools receive annual written notice that they may make a submission to have that exclusion revoked with advice given at the time of exclusion and online.

I am particularly pleased to speak in support of this bill, specifically the enabling of e-kindy to be delivered by parents and teachers to children who live in a remote location, have medical issues or have an itinerant lifestyle. The rollout of this program is an important educational reform to provide a quality education to some of our youngest Queenslanders. The rollout of this program is in line with the National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education and is designed to provide universal access to quality early childhood education.

As Assistant Minister for Technical and Further Education, I represented the Minister for Education, Training and Employment at the 41st Isolated Children's Parents Association conference in Goondiwindi in September. At the ICPA conference I heard firsthand the challenges parents face in ensuring their children have access to education whilst living in rural and remote locations. This was a fantastic opportunity for me to gain a better understanding of and a stronger appreciation for the importance of continuing to support rural and remote Queensland children and families. In Queensland we have more than four times the number of students in remote and very remote locations than New South Wales and almost 15 times the number of these students than Victoria. A third of our students live outside the metropolitan areas.

Parents and home tutors at the ICPA conference welcomed the full implementation of the e-kindy program, which is currently in the trial phase. The trial has received incredibly positive feedback, and the conference even passed a motion that acknowledged the outstanding efforts of the Brisbane School of Distance Education to provide access to an engaging e-kindy program for children where geographical isolation has previously prevented access to kindergarten.

With a push towards universal access to a quality kindergarten program under the National Partnership Agreement for Early Childhood Education, the bill clearly demonstrates the government's commitment to ensuring children are able to access and participate in kindergarten, regardless of their geographical location. And while children in my electorate of Mount Coot-tha are generally able to access kindergarten facilities relatively easily, the introduction of e-kindy will also enable children with diverse needs to experience kindergarten, too.

The e-kindy program is a digital, teacher directed learning program deliverable on the internet and focused on preparing kindergarten-age children for prep. The e-kindy program will be provided at no cost to eligible children and delivered by state schools of distance education, leveraging on the schools' existing infrastructure, administrative processes and expertise in the delivery of distance education programs.

The early years are the most important years. I support the bill because it supports a fundamental right of providing all children with a quality education. The Minister for Education, Training and Employment often refers to the notion that education will no longer be siloed as its own consideration. It will be given a story, and the story is that, from the moment a child begins their education journey in one of our kindergartens to the moment they are employed in the Queensland economy, this government is committed to giving them the basic skills, pathways and qualifications to succeed in their chosen career. The introduction of e-kindy is another step towards realising this goal.

Like my colleagues, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of Julie Grantham to this important reform of e-kindy as the former director-general of the Department of Education, Training and Employment. Given Julie's experience and incredible passion for education and training in Queensland, I learned an incredible amount from her over the past seven months. I know that principals in the schools in my electorate have enormous respect for Julie. I wish her all the very best in her retirement. I commend the bill to the House.