




Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR ALBERT**

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### **EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (11.51 am): I rise to speak to the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. Our schools need to provide a safe environment so that our children are allowed to prosper and develop the skills that they need in later life. We regard our schools as the bastions of academia, but schools are much more than that: they are places that help to provide our children with life skills and moral guidance through practical social interaction. Students learn both good and bad habits from adults and potentially other students at school. After all, we are all role models. One of the key aspects of this bill is to give principals the power to maintain a high level of control over the conduct of individuals within the school precinct. Under this legislation, the principal will be able to give a verbal direction to a hostile individual to leave the school and not re-enter the premises within a 24-hour period. Under the previous legislation, this direction had to be given in writing. The problem with putting such a direction in writing was that such situations can be very fluid and can escalate very quickly. For a principal to have to go back to their office, get a piece of paper, write down the direction and serve it on the individual seemed completely and utterly impractical. But there is still a high degree of accountability in that what transpired in the altercation is to be recorded.

This legislation also deals with the difference in requirements for students who are absent. At the moment, if a student in a state school goes on a holiday with their parents for a period of time—just say a month or two—the principal of that school can deal with that absence quite easily whereas a principal of a private school has to apply to the department to grant this absence. This bill streamlines that system. It cuts red tape for our private schools and allows private schools to have the same process as state schools. Certainly, students are always encouraged to attend school for every single day. It is crucial that our next generation gets the education that they rightly deserve and need so that they can have a career path which they deserve and desperately need.

The committee chair referred to the Great Results Guarantee. This funding from this program has certainly empowered our principals. Under the Great Results Guarantee, our learning institutes have the ability to customise funding arrangements so that money can be directed into places where it is needed desperately. When it comes to this funding, schools in the Albert electorate are certainly going to receive a massive windfall next year as \$3 million will be funded directly into those schools, which is over \$1 million more than what was funded this year. The Great Results Guarantee is a great initiative. It will certainly help students to learn the basics—reading, writing and arithmetic, the fundamentals of education.

This bill also contains provisions relating to criminal history checks. As I have stated previously, the safety of students and staff is paramount to providing a productive learning environment. I can certainly say that many parents have expressed their support for this initiative, because they have a very dim view of criminal behaviour and believe that we need a safer learning environment. This bill enhances the power to suspend students who are charged with or convicted of a serious offence. In addition, students convicted of a serious offence can also be excluded from school if that is deemed

to be in the best interests of other students and staff. I believe that that is common sense. I realise that some people are concerned about this provision, but the safety of our children is paramount. This bill provides for the CEO of the Department of Education, Training and Employment to seek information from the Queensland Police Service regarding criminal behaviour. This information can be used to maintain a high degree of safety in our school environments to allow students to study in a safe and secure environment.

This government has spent a lot of time improving our learning environments. Another great achievement of this government is in terms of school maintenance. I have said many times in this House that when I became the member for Albert the schools in my electorate were run down. Parents were saying, 'Look, I don't want to send my child to that school because look at it. There is paint peeling off the walls. The doors have holes in them. It looks absolutely appalling.' Parents were saying, 'We don't want to send our children to those schools.' I can certainly say that one school in my area now looks brand spanking new. Parents are flooding to send their children to that school because it is such a great educational facility. It has had a new coat of paint. It is looking brand spanking new again. It is a fantastic facility. That school is Pimpama State School. The teachers and the principal, Marius Marx, certainly deserve a loud round of applause for their efforts. Having the school looking brand spanking new again has made a massive difference. I realise that you cannot judge a book by its cover, but first impressions count.

I want to refer to school safety. Today in my electorate a wonderful event is taking place and that is the installation of additional flashing school zone lights at Windaroo State School and Windaroo Valley State High School. The installation of those flashing school lights at those schools joins a long list of flashing school zone lights that have been installed in my area since the last election at Coomera Springs State School, Upper Coomera State College, Coomera Anglican College, St Stephen's College, Mount Warren Park State School and Cedar Creek State School. That list highlights my efforts as the local member to fight for the installation of this important safety equipment outside local schools. I would also like to thank the Gold Coast City Council for its involvement in getting flashing school zone lights for Norfolk Village and Pimpama state schools.

In closing, I thank the committee chair, Rosemary Menkens. It is always a pleasure to have her as chair of our committee. She does a wonderful job, as do Melissa and Bernice, our researchers, and my fellow committee members. It is a humbling experience being involved in the education committee and learning what is transpiring in education in this state. I am very proud to see the direction that this government is taking. Through the Queensland Plan Queenslanders have spoken very loudly about how important education is for the future of this state and for developing our economy. I thank the minister for this well-thought-out piece of legislation.