




Speech By  
**Mark Boothman**

**MEMBER FOR ALBERT**

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**EDUCATION AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Albert—LNP) (12.19 pm): I rise today to make a reasonably short contribution to the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. From the outset, I would like to thank my fellow committee members, the committee staff and all those who participated in the hearings for their contributions.

I follow in the footsteps of the shadow minister and the member for Maryborough in wishing our teacher aides a fantastic day tomorrow. Teacher Aide Day is 2 September. They do a fantastic job. I have a daughter in prep this year. My daughter absolutely loves going to school. She does not like missing school. She finds it an interesting and exciting place where she gets to catch-up with her friends and learn lots of new and interesting things.

This bill can be broken down into multiple key parts: making prep compulsory; making changes to the regulation of the teaching profession—I will go into that in a little more detail later—introducing debt recovery arrangements for non-state school funding; and strengthening the oversight of non-state schools. Prep was introduced in Queensland in 2007. Reading the committee's report we can see that we have made some inroads when it comes to our NAPLAN results, and we should all be proud of that. We are part of the world community and education is paramount. We need to ensure that Australia is a leader in terms of education. When one does a little research on this matter one finds that when it comes to the PISA, the Programme for International Student Assessment, results from 2009 to 2012 we have seen a decline in education in Australia across-the-board. Unfortunately, this is something we need to work on.

**A government member** interjected.

**Mr BOOTHMAN:** When it comes to this issue, though, the LNP is very supportive of getting the best standard and a world-class education for our young people. As a father of a daughter in prep that is certainly something that I think we should strive for.

We need our young people to be engaged in reading and their families to be engaged in reading. It has been documented many times in the past that reading to your children at home and getting them interested in picking up a book and reading it and inspiring their imagination is very important. It gives them the best start in life. Given the hours we do as members of parliament, my wife certainly takes the lead role in sitting down with my children and reading them books and inspiring their imaginations.

I turn to the issue of the regulation of the teaching profession. The bill makes some minor changes to lower the regulatory burden on the College of Teachers—for example, the requirement for registration cards. One of the major changes in this legislation involves how disciplinary action is taken against teachers. I am sure everybody in this chamber would agree that the safety of our children is paramount and this has to be given priority. Removing disciplinary information enables the College of Teachers to consider any information as the basis for any conduct proceedings. Furthermore, the bill talks about improving responsiveness when it comes to protecting children at risk. I certainly commend the government for that. They are trying to speed up the process.

As the member for Broadwater mentioned before, one of the main concerns we have with this bill is the issue of vexatious claims and how they are dealt with. I have actually spoken to a couple of teachers who have had frivolous and vexatious claims made against them. Whilst it is critical to ensure student safety and protection, claims against staff members which are misleading and untrue potentially destroy the careers of innocent individuals. The strain and stress it puts on them is enormous. It is something that I find very concerning.

We certainly do need to protect children, but justice needs to be served when it comes to these claims against teachers before the information goes out into the media. It could potentially destroy a person's career and it is something that they will never come back from. A couple of teachers have come to see me about this legislation. One teacher said, 'Mark, these accusations against me completely destroyed the very fibre of my being. It made me leave the profession.' This person was a great teacher. Before this complaint, this person, in their long career, had never had any complaints against them. This one complaint destroyed her passion and love for teaching. I feel there needs to be protections against vexatious claims. If a person is guilty then the book should be thrown at them. When it comes to vexatious claims, people's names and integrity need to be protected.

They are the main parts of the bill that I wanted to speak to. Again I thank my fellow committee members for their work. It is good to see government members and opposition members working together on this bill and achieving a great outcome.