



**SEATH HOLSWICH MP – STATE MEMBER FOR PINE RIVERS**

## **SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT**

**21<sup>st</sup> August 2013**

# **EDUCATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

I rise to offer a short contribution in support of the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I want to focus the bulk of my short contribution on the move of year 7 to secondary school and the associated Flying Start trial that is currently underway.

This bill, once passed, will amend the definitions of primary and secondary education in the act, ensuring that from 2015 primary education will be defined as including prep through to year 6, while secondary education will be defined as year 7 to year 12.

As the minister said when he introduced this bill into parliament, secondary school is the right place for this cohort of students. Whilst I agree with the minister on this statement, or at least my head agrees with the minister on this statement, as the parent of a year [6] student and him being my eldest child, my heart is torn about high school being the right place for year 7 students. I think it is probably partly to do with the denial that I have that my child is actually growing up to the point where he is only [one] term away from being in high school. So maybe we can go back the other way and move year 8 back into primary school and that will help me with my midlife parenting crisis. But I am sure I will come to grips with that as the reality of it draws closer.

Secondary schools have the specialist teaching and facility resources required to provide a quality education to year 7 students and will bring our schools in line with other Australian states. This has the added benefit of making the transition easier for students who move from one state to another, particularly at the time of transition from primary to high school.

I am fortunate enough to have one of the Flying Start trial schools in the Pine Rivers electorate. Bray Park State High School joined the Flying Start trial at the start of this year, with around 80 students enrolling for year 7 in high school. This exceeded expectations by nearly 30 students, showing the popularity of the move. Bray Park State High School have worked very closely with their feeder schools – in particular, Strathpine West State School – to ensure a smooth transition for the students involved. I would like to publicly acknowledge the principals particularly of those two schools – Michael Knox and Mark Bates – for the work they have done to ensure that that transition has been a smooth one.

We have seen teaching staff moving across from Strathpine West State School to Bray Park State High School to help facilitate the transition and, as well as that particularly strategy, it is very pleasing to see that the chaplains from the two schools have worked closely together to assist the students with their transition. I pass on my thanks to the chaplains from those schools – Gideon Blazey and Eric Swavley – for the support they have provided for these students. I think it is important to point out how these schools are working so well together on this transition because, if other schools can follow the lead being shown by Bray Park State High School and Strathpine West State School, then I am sure the state-wide transition in 2015 will be a relatively smooth one.

The infrastructure support for the introduction of year 7 at Bray Park State High School was completed in October 2012 in readiness for the introduction of year 7 this year. Nine classrooms were refurbished, including the creation of a flexible learning area for year 7 students, at a total cost of \$370,244. It is also pleasing to see that the infrastructure support for the introduction of year 7 for the other state high school in my electorate, Pine Rivers State High School, was also completed in May 2013 – well ahead of the 2015 introduction of year

7 to the school. The school benefited from the refurbishment of 12 classrooms and a new two-space relocatable building at a total cost of \$911,143.

This move of year 7 will obviously impact non-state schools as well as state schools, and this bill will introduce a streamlined process for non-state schools to ensure a reduced administrative burden for schools needing to change their accreditation status from 2015 onwards. Under business-as-usual circumstances, it can take many months for non-state schools to change their accreditation status to add an extra year of schooling. This bill will allow for this process to be completed in just over a month as part of the state-wide transition. This is certainly a sensible move and it will reduce administrative burdens as this transition takes place over the next 18 months.

I think it is important to note as well that the Accreditation Board, Independent Schools Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission have all been consulted about this process and have all indicated their support of the proposed transitional arrangements.

This bill will facilitate a smooth transition of year 7 into high school in 2015, ensuring administrative requirements are kept to a minimum and processes are streamlined for both state and non-state schools. I certainly commend the minister and his department for ensuring that this legislation is in place in plenty of time to facilitate the transition process during the rest of this year and next year in readiness for the 2015 state-wide commencement.

I also want to briefly touch on the common-sense move to ensure that increasing debt levels associated with international students attending Queensland state schools, due to not paying their total fees, are addressed.

There are obviously loopholes in the current legislation that are being exploited, unintentionally or otherwise, that are stripping significant amounts of potential funding from our education system. For there to be no enforcement mechanism available for parents who do not pay the required and for there to be no option to cancel that enrolment is an untenable situation, and I am pleased to see this being rectified through this legislation. Hardship provisions will remain in place, but it is entirely appropriate that the option to cancel an enrolment as a last resort be an option available to the director-general.

I commend the bill to the House.