



Speech by

RACHEL NOLAN

MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

Hansard 20 & 21 February 2002

EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND STUDIES AUTHORITY) BILL

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (5.53 p.m.): I rise to speak in support of this bill. I know that it has the support of the opposition. In common with most members who have spoken, I believe it makes perfect sense that there be one overarching curriculum body. I commend the government on the consultation that it has undertaken with staff, particularly with the staff of those three bodies who are affected. I hope that this move will lead to greater efficiency and a streamlining of work for teachers and subject coordinators in high schools.

I have a great interest in education policy. In the long term, nothing is surer than that individual and global competitiveness will be determined by education and skills. Only quality state education will ensure that all kids have real opportunities in this world. That is what makes the Howard government's ideological preference for a private model and its failure to fund public education such a disgrace. In places such as Ipswich, the differences in the facilities available to state and private school students is sometimes stark. Many state school kids learn in classrooms that need a coat of paint while private school kids choose between international study tours.

When it comes to tertiary education, Australia's public universities are moving towards taking Australian fee-paying undergraduate students—the defining step in winding back the Whitlam reforms. The failure on the part of the Howard government to invest seriously in public education is a national disgrace. It short-changes young people now and will be paid for by the nation in the future. In contrast, the Beattie Labor government has a genuine strategy to deal with these changes through the Smart State. That is an agenda with which I am very proud to be associated.

Schools in Ipswich are doing a tremendous job in educating our young people, in providing them with practical literacy and numeracy skills, in expanding their academic boundaries and in opening their minds to the world that lies beyond their experience. I wish to inform the House of some of their successes. Over the past three years, Bremer State High School, the only state high school in my electorate and the leading state high school in the region, has significantly transformed its environment. After receiving a state government grant to develop a health-promoting school, Bremer State High School students, teaching staff and support staff banded together. They focused their energies on creating a healthy school with initiatives including developing a healthy school curriculum, particularly in health and physical education and home economics classes; the subsidy of a healthy menu at the school canteen; improvements to the school environment, including painting; and stress relief workshops for teachers. I visit the Bremer State High School regularly and I have certainly noticed the improvement in the environment of the school. Their success was recognised with Bremer State High School being invited to tell its success story at a national conference on health-promoting schools coming up shortly on the Gold Coast.

Bremer State High School also received a Showcase award for its gifted and talented students program and last year one of its teachers was recognised at a state level for teaching excellence. These high standards have been reflected in an increase in the retention rate from 56 per cent about four years ago to 70 per cent now. Although Bremer State High School is still a little way from the state's aim of an 88 per cent retention rate, a 14 per cent increase in four years is certainly a good trend and I think it should be commended. The standard of teaching and learning at Bremer State High School is second to none. The ethos of providing an environment that supports all students—from students with disabilities to the gifted; from rich students to poor students—is one that should be supported. Bremer State High School is a very good school.

In the past year, Bremer State High School has seen a significant improvement in its infrastructure. The more than \$2 million performing arts and multimedia centre is of university standard and last year the school was completely repainted under the state's excellent Triple R maintenance program. Certainly, more work has to be done both in upgrading computer facilities and in further maintenance. I understand the importance of these matters to the school. However, I say that, with the Triple R maintenance program, the Beattie government has recognised that school spirit and learning outcomes improve in an attractive and healthy environment. At Bremer State High School, the efforts of the school community and the government have made a real difference and, with these policies, we are on the right track. I am sure that this year's school captains, Michael Little and Stephanie Edwardson, will lead the school well and continue Tim Follet's and Aleisha Carter's excellent work last year.

As an important regional centre, Ipswich has a fine tradition of Catholic and secular private education. I am very proud to have attended one of these private schools, Ipswich Girls Grammar, and my family's links to the Catholic schools are very strong. I wish to commend St Edmund's College under school captains Paul Dryden, Geoff Skippington and James Underwood and cultural captain, Paul Curtis, for the excellent work that has been done this year. Already St Edmund's has received a successful visit from its Chinese sister school, complete with girls, and I believe that the cultural understanding that was achieved is invaluable.

Across the road, St Mary's school is coping well without its former deputy principal. I wish Principal Mary Wallis and new Deputy Principal Margaret Petheridge a very successful year. Currently, the school is doing some excellent work in improving the transition to high school under the Key 8 program. Last year, Ipswich Girls Grammar and Ipswich Grammar School both achieved excellent academic results. Kate Gowler, Rachel Lim, Alexander Davani, Michael Duce and Evan Kilpatrick will lead the schools towards good results this year.

State primary schools in Ipswich are doing some tremendous work when it comes to defining individual school identities, as recommended by the 2010 document. My old school, Ipswich East State School, is developing itself as a community school and both the active P&C and school principal, Fiona Juppenlatz, are doing a lot of work to create gardens and shade areas to improve the school's outside environment. Across town, Raceview State School is probably breathing a sigh of relief after the wonderful centenary celebrations last year. Kaye Calvert, the chair of the centenary committee, led a wonderful team. I wish her and her husband, Bob, all the best during this difficult time.

Ms NOLAN (Ipswich—ALP) (11.37 a.m.), continuing: Churchill State School is welcoming its new principal Peter Manfell and Central State School is looking forward to the construction of a new administration area this year. Blair State School is looking great after the recent completion of its new building and its paint job last year. I commend principal Peter Doyle and teachers, including Dale Kitching, on the new and innovative approach they are taking to senior education in looking at how kids learn in different ways and adopting Edward de Bono's many hats model.

Bundamba State School is doing some wonderful work on promoting multiculturalism. Last year it was a pleasure to be invited by principal Barbara Loban to watch the students at the special Wednesday assembly share stories of their cultural backgrounds. Ipswich West State School, under the leadership of principal Peter Case, has done some excellent work in identifying literacy levels of students in the junior school and putting in place targeted programs to improve those results. Across the whole school literacy standards have consistently improved, and this effort should be recognised.

Silkstone State School is one of the largest and best established in the Ipswich electorate. I went to preschool there. The school is looking forward to doing some landscaping this year and is doing tremendous work in continuing to support the alternative school pilot. In Ipswich with this pilot we are addressing the momentous issue of educating kids whose behavioural problems make it impossible for them to fit into a conventional school environment. I congratulate principal Rod Evans and alternative schoolteachers Tony and Susan Sullivan on the work they are doing. The success of this pilot is important for the continuing development of education policy. I would also genuinely commend Teen Care and the Ipswich Community Youth Service on the successes they have had with educating kids whom too many have branded too hard.

Ipswich's state special schools are breaking new ground by specialising in particular areas of disability. Claremont is involved in an important program for kids with behavioural problems which recognises something that should be obvious but is sometimes hard to keep in mind, that is, all behaviour has communicative intent.

Ipswich Special School is doing great work with kids with multiple disabilities. I commend principal Peter Davis and the P&C, including Keith McDonald and Ipswich citizen of the year Jim Runham, for their advocacy on behalf of their students. I welcome new principal Neil Larter to Ipswich West Special School and look forward to working with him. Bethany Lutheran is a lovely little school community with a high standard of teaching and a very active and supportive P&C. Last year it was a pleasure to speak to year 7 students about what I, as their local member, do. I wish to pass on the

message to the school that I am happy to continue to be involved with the school and to support it. The St Mary's and Sacred Heart primary schools are small Catholic parish schools with a tremendous caring environment and strong community. Both provide an excellent education in a context of Catholic social justice.

Ipswich schools are doing some great work. The overall points on which I wish to conclude are these. As a Labor member I am committed to striving for a community in which all people, regardless of their backgrounds, have equal opportunities in life. This is an aim which can best be achieved through the generations by giving all young people a quality education. I am confident that every school in Ipswich is doing that. The biggest issue confronting us is the maintenance of state school environments, because it is clear that kids feel good about being in schools and work well if the schools look and feel good. The state is on the right track with the Triple R maintenance program, though in Ipswich, where the schools are generally quite old, I will always be seeking our fair share.

The second significant issue is the education of kids with behavioural and learning problems. In the past we have failed too many kids by classing them as difficult and ignoring them or throwing them out. We cannot and will not continue in that failure. Educating kids with learning and behavioural problems is complex, little understood and resource intensive, but we are taking it seriously and making steps. I thank local psychologist Dr Ken Piaggio and Claremont Special School principal, Jo Minchinton, for the advice they have provided to me on these issues. We are working towards a strategy, and I am confident that in Ipswich, and more broadly as a government, good work is being done.