



Speech by

**RACHEL NOLAN**

**MEMBER FOR IPSWICH**

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**GRAMMAR SCHOOLS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Ms NOLAN** (Ipswich—ALP) (2.40 p.m.): I rise to speak briefly in support of the Grammar Schools and Other Legislation Amendment Bill brought to the House by the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh. There are two excellent grammar schools in my electorate, the Ipswich Grammar School and the Ipswich Girls Grammar School.

**Mrs Reilly:** My husband is an old boy of Ipswich Grammar.

**Ms NOLAN:** The member for Mudgeeraba's husband is an old boy of Ipswich Grammar, which is better than his being an old boy of the Ipswich Girls Grammar, I imagine.

**Mrs Reilly:** Well, I am pleased. They got it right.

**Ms NOLAN:** They got it right. Ipswich Grammar School is the oldest secondary school in Queensland, having been established in 1863. It is a school of considerable reputation in Ipswich and statewide. Interestingly, one of the founders of the school was Arthur Macalister, who was the member for Ipswich on and off over a number of years and the second Premier of Queensland.

I have to admit that in my role as the member for Ipswich I had not heard of this Macalister character until quite recently when the Speaker approached me to gain the support of the community to purchase a portrait of Mr Macalister to hang in the parliament. That I did. Ipswich Grammar School very kindly donated most of the money, along with Tom Edwards and his brother Sir Llew Edwards, which allowed us to purchase the portrait of Mr Macalister for the parliament. As well as being a founder of the Ipswich Grammar School, this Macalister character was the key person who established the first railway in Queensland from Ipswich to Grandchester, and then the railway to Brisbane. He was involved in the establishment of St Stephens Presbyterian Church and he was very active in the lodge.

The Ipswich Grammar School has been very proud to find this character and to claim him as its own. He was certainly an interesting character. He became known as 'Slippery Mac' for his dodgy political deals. Despite the reputation of the time, 150 years or so has somewhat redeemed him. These days, we in Ipswich are happy to claim him as our own.

Since those beginnings the Ipswich Grammar School has established a reputation for education and excellence all around the state. Last year it was the third most successful school academically of all the boys schools in Queensland. It has a tremendous sporting reputation and a good record of pastoral care as well.

I know a little bit about the Ipswich Girls Grammar School, having gone there myself. My mother is now deputy principal. It is a school that has changed enormously over the years. It has gone from having only a small number of girls, focusing on the education of ladies to be good wives, to a school that has a tremendous academic record. It continues to produce, I would hope, quite respectable young women.

Grammar school governance is unique, and this bill takes a number of steps to protect grammar schools and to alter their governance. The bill protects the grammar school name, which I think is very important. All of the state's grammar schools have worked very hard to develop a reputation over a number of years. This bill takes some important steps, as the member for Toowoomba South touched on, to protect that name.

Importantly, the bill also gives the minister power to question boards when she is not satisfied with their financial accountability and to direct boards to act in particular ways. The need for these

powers was highlighted by the collapse of the Rockhampton Girls Grammar School which to many people came as a real surprise in the grammar school community. In a way, grammar schools had traded on their name for many, many years. One of the grammar schools getting itself into serious financial difficulty was, in a sense, unexpected in the broader education community. It highlighted the need for the new powers that we are seeing today.

The nature of grammar schools has very much changed. Most of them are boarding schools, but in recent years we have largely seen the collapse of boarding due to changes in the rural economy. Grammar schools have also come under much greater competition from state schools, which improve their reputation and excellence all the time, and from other independent schools. In Ipswich, for instance, the West Moreton Anglican College has been in a good position to receive very generous federal funding, as new independent schools do, and has placed considerable pressure on the existing grammar schools. In that environment it is important to shore up the processes of grammar school governance. It is not enough for grammar schools to trade on their time name and to trade on their reputation. I think that is primarily what this bill is about.

This bill establishes much stronger governance and management procedures. I think it is an important step to emphasise to grammar schools that they need to take very seriously their financial accountability. It also says to grammar schools that we as a government are extremely interested in them and supportive of them. I commend the bill to the House.