



Education Amendment (Computing Skills) Bill.

Second Reading

Mr NEWELL (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Dr Refshauge [10.47 a.m.]: I move

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Education Amendment (Computing Skills) Bill proposes an amendment to the Education Act 1990 to require candidates for the School Certificate to be tested for computing skills. This change represents another milestone in the continuum of K-12 education in New South Wales. It fulfils the Government's commitment to ensuring that, by the end of compulsory schooling, all students in New South Wales are capable and competent users of information and communication technologies. The K-12 continuum has already seen the implementation of a full suite of K-6 syllabuses with outcomes, and a new standards-based Higher School Certificate and a strengthened School Certificate. A review of the years 7 to 10 curriculum has been completed, with syllabuses to be distributed to schools this year for progressive implementation from 2005 to allow teachers time for familiarisation and planning. Since coming to office in 1995 the Government has acted to renew and reinvigorate the School Certificate. Mandatory external tests in English literacy and mathematics were introduced in 1998, science was added in 1999 and Australian history, geography, civics and citizenship in 2002.

Computing skills assessments for year 10 are currently being trialled in our schools, with over 580 schools taking part this year. Mandatory computer skills testing will be implemented as part of the School Certificate in 2006. The new year 7-10 syllabus contains a strong emphasis on using information and communication technologies and the mandatory implementation of the computing skills test in 2006 would be well timed. The bill achieves the objective of requiring a mandatory computing skills test in government and non-government schools by amending the Education Act 1990. Section 94 of the Act prescribes the requirements for the award of the School Certificate. This section currently mandates statewide tests in English literacy, mathematics, science and Australian history, geography and civics and citizenship. This section also determined the effective dates from which these tests were to be conducted.

Schedule 1 [1] to the bill adds a further statewide test in computing skills to those already specified at section 94 of the Act. Schedule 1 [2] sets the timing of the mandatory status of the test in Computing Skills to have effect from 1 January 2006 or, if a later date is deemed necessary by the Minister after consultation with the Board of Studies, that later date. The bill represents the fulfilment of the Government's plan to strengthen the School Certificate. Placing an external examination at the end of year 10 will demonstrate the importance with which the Government views the acquisition of computing skills by students prior to them proceeding into year 11 and studying for the Higher School Certificate. I commend the bill to the House.

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