



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE NO. 3 – EDUCATION

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Upper House Inquiry Backs Parental Rights**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**6 September 2021**

The Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 3 (Education) has today delivered its report on the Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill 2020, which is awaiting debate in the NSW Upper House. The report comes after a year-long inquiry into the Bill's provisions and broader consideration of parental rights in NSW schools.

It makes a series of recommendations aimed at re-asserting the rights of parents within the education system and ensuring they have more of a say in their children's education. It also recommends a major update to the Education Department's Bulletin 55 on how to handle the question of transgender in schools.

The Committee Chair, the Hon Mark Latham MLC stated, 'Parents have become increasingly sidelined and excluded from their children's education. In some schools, parents are now seen as a nuisance, as unqualified laypeople who should get out of the way of 'we-know-best' education experts. Unfortunately, this view has become more common in the teaching profession. It has coincided with the proliferation of political teachings and social engineering in the classroom, as teachers push more of their personal worldview onto students.'

'My Private Member's Bill seeks to reverse this trend by reasserting the rights and role of parents in the moral, ethical and social development of their children, such that no school should be teaching material in these areas against the wishes of parents. I thank the majority of Committee members from each of the major parties (Labor, Liberal and Nationals) who support this approach.'

The Committee's Inquiry has identified the need for safeguards and protections to provide greater transparency in what is taught in our schools and to ensure parents are more thoroughly informed of classroom content - a 'no-surprises' strategy for the benefit of families.

'Parents want a better deal from schools. They want more involvement and clearer protections for their children against politically ideological content. The Parental Rights Bill is a timely reform for them', Mr Latham said.

The report calls on the NSW Government to support the Bill's suite of parental primacy provisions in recognition of its obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The report also identifies a number of opportunities for improvement with the Department of Education's *Controversial Issues in Schools Policy*, including the need to raise awareness of the framework and mechanisms available to parents to exercise their rights within the school system.

'On the question of gender fluidity, the committee has recommended not to pursue legislative change. During the Inquiry, the outdated nature of the Department's Legal Issues Bulletin 55 on Transgender Students in Schools became clear. The most immediate way of addressing community concerns is to update the Bulletin's advice to schools', Mr Latham said.

'Instead of sidelining parents and sometimes keeping them in the dark about possible gender transition in their children, schools should take a secondary but nonetheless supportive role in assisting families. Schools exist primarily for academic excellence and vocational achievement, not to become gender fluidity factories against the wishes of parents. Some of the practices in NSW schools currently cause more harm than good in this regard.'

'The Committee's recommendations for Bulletin 55 correct the imbalance of power and process that currently run against parents and medical experts in dealing with transgenderism', Mr Latham said.

Information about the inquiry is available on the committee's website:

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2610>

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