

Second Reading

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from 19 October 2017.)

The Hon. R.L. BROKENSHIRE (16:23): I rise on behalf of Australian Conservatives to speak to the Education and Children's Services Bill, which is a bill that repeals the Education Act 1972 and the Children's Services Act 1985 and attempts to set out a contemporary framework for the education of children in this state, and attempts to further support students, teachers and schools to provide a quality education. We all have that desire for our children. Of course, it can only be a desire with an outcome if the right structures are in place and the right support services are there.

A consultation draft of this bill was released for public consultation between 19 December 2016 and 10 March 2017, and the bill makes clear that the paramount consideration of the operation, administration and enforcement of the act is the best interests of the children. We all want outcomes that are in the best interests of the children. Having said that, we also have a responsibility to the parents who are responsible for those children.

That is where some problems lie with this bill, and therefore we have filed some amendments, which I will go into in detail when we sit to debate the bill at the committee stage. We will not oppose the bill. There is no doubt that the Education Act needs modernising from time to time. The South Australian schools association, SAASSO, has expressed quite a lot of concern about this bill. The Australian Conservatives have been through this bill with a fine-toothed comb, and we have concerns about certain aspects of it.

I note that the Liberal opposition also has some amendments on file, as do the Australian Conservatives, and I would ask my colleagues to have a good look at those amendments, and then I will go into detail in committee on our amendments. If we were not in a position to get up some of those amendments that bring a focus back to parents' rights, then we would have to reconsider our position at the third reading, because we have a lot of parents who are very unhappy about what is occurring in our education system when it comes to what I can only describe as, at the moment under this government, a lack of parents' rights and a lack of informative advice going through to the schools.

We are not far away from an election. This is an important act, but notwithstanding that, there may or may not be a change of government. We are only sitting for three more days, so I would assume that it is going to be difficult to get this bill through. I am not quite sure why it is being rushed, although I have my suspicions. I will not be a cynical politician—that would not be right on this occasion—but we will have a close look at this bill when we get into committee.

With those words, we have put the framework there in the second reading for the government. We support the bill, we have some questions about why there is a rush on at the moment, so we will need to spend some time in committee. There are quite a lot of important amendments, and we will be working hard to get approval for our amendments. Based on how the committee stage pans out, we reserve our right at the third reading, and we have more work to do on consultation with key industry sectors that represent the parents of the children. With those words, that is enough from me on this bill.

Debate adjourned on motion of Hon. J.M. Gazzola.