



Speech by

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GRAMMAR SCHOOLS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mrs MILLER (Bundamba—ALP) (2.46 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the Grammar Schools and Other Legislation Amendment Bill currently before the House. I would like to congratulate the minister, Anna Bligh, on bringing yet another piece of legislation before the House that will reinforce, support and protect schooling in Queensland. This time it is about grammar schools.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the act in respect of the Department of Education's public benefit test, which found it to be anticompetitive, to provide for protection of the grammar school name, and to provide greater clarity in relation to the minister's powers in the event that a grammar school experiences serious financial trouble.

There are currently eight grammar schools in Queensland constituted as statutory bodies. The first, Ipswich Grammar, was established in my home town in 1863, yet another first for Ipswich. This school claims such famous past students as Sir Harry Gibbs, the former Chief Justice of the High Court, footballers Kerrod and Kevin Walters, cricketer Craig McDermott, tennis player Roy Emerson and celebrated cinematographer Charles Chauvel. It was followed by Brisbane Grammar School in 1868 and then Brisbane Girls Grammar School in 1875. The founder of Brisbane Girls Grammar, Sir Charles Lilly, had what was probably a novel concept at the time. He had a vision to provide young women with the same educational opportunities as their brothers. These were followed by Toowoomba Grammar in 1877, Rockhampton Grammar in 1881, Townsville Grammar in 1888 and finally Ipswich Girls Grammar and Rockhampton Girls Grammar in 1892. The Ipswich Girls Grammar motto is 'Omnia Superat—'

Ms Nolan: 'Diligentia'.

Mrs MILLER: '—Diligentia'. I thank my honourable colleague the member for Ipswich for helping me out with the Latin.

Ms Nolan: A motto which was a 'super rat'.

Mrs MILLER: I am advised that they used to have a motto, which was a 'super rat'. That was the mascot at the school! Bremer State High School, which is my old high school, did not provide for the study of such dead languages. In the absence of my classically educated colleague the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Matt Foley, I had to resort to the Internet for translation. The member for Ipswich might be able to correct me on this, but I believe it is: diligence overcomes all obstacles.

Ms Nolan: It's the first time I've heard it.

Mrs MILLER: The member for Ipswich has had some education today. That is certainly evident in the spirit of the school. Can I say to the House that my Auntie Isabel Verrall was a student at Ipswich Girls Grammar School. She went on to teach many, many primary school students in our state school system over many decades. She also taught at Silkstone State School where I was a student. I can tell members that it was very difficult having an aunt teaching year 2 when I was there in year 1. Everything I did was reported home. My Auntie Jean Pringle was also the infants principal at Silkstone State School at the time so I could not move. I think I had a very inhibited years 1 and 2 at that school.

Ms Keech: Were you a perfect student?

Mrs MILLER: Yes, I think I probably was a perfect student. My elder daughter, Stephanie, was a student at Ipswich Girls Grammar School, and the father of the member for Ipswich, Mr Nolan, was one of her favourite teachers at the school. He was a supply teacher. I do not know whether she was

just telling me this to crawl to the member for Ipswich, but never mind. My younger daughter, Brianna, is currently a student at the grammar school. Principal Susan Just does a fantastic job supported by Mrs Nolan, the mother of the member for Ipswich. Everything is going well at the school.

The eight grammar schools share a number of distinctive characteristics. They were initiated by their communities to fulfil a perceived need; they are governed by boards of trustees, including nominees of the minister, elected donors and subscribers; they have no religious affiliation; and they enjoy autonomy in operational matters similar to other state schools. It is true that grammar schools as part of the non-state school family have made a substantial contribution to education in Queensland.

There has been comprehensive consultation on this bill not only within the ranks of the grammar schools but also within the broader educational community. The bill continues the work of the Minister for Education in ensuring that the legislative instruments that govern education in this state are current, practical and relevant. The grammar schools in my home city of Ipswich are certainly a great part of our community. Many parents really struggle to send their children to grammar schools, which really are doing a wonderful job. I have pleasure in commending the bill to the House.