




Speech By  
**Hon. Dr Steven Miles**  
**MEMBER FOR MOUNT COOT-THA**

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## ADJOURNMENT

### Safe Schools Program

 **Hon. SJ MILES** (Mount Coot-tha—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef) (8.24 pm): I am proud to support the Safe Schools program, because I am proud of the work they are doing here in Queensland for LGBTIQ students, their parents and their teachers. The program is aimed at creating safe and inclusive school environments for same-sex attracted, intersex and gender diverse students, staff and families. How could anyone disagree that all schoolchildren should be safe, happy and healthy? How could anyone disagree that all schoolchildren should be treated with dignity and respect?

I was appalled when the member for Everton attacked the program, citing exposure to resources that specifically address transgender issues as his reasons. He said that through the program young children were being exposed to adult concepts, but for a trans child their gender identity and the way they feel about their body is not an adult concept; it is their reality. We know that many transgender children begin expressing their true gender identity from an early age, so to suggest that we should prevent them access to vital counselling and support until they are 18 is nothing short of cruel. The member for Everton cited one link to an external site that is not at the core of the Safe Schools program anyway. I do not think he actually knows what the program does. He said that he thought bullying in schools was unacceptable—which it is—but saying that you want schools to be safe and happy places is easier said than done.

Kids can be cruel to other kids who are different, but I think these kids, just like adults, are afraid of what they do not understand. That is why Safe Schools is such an important resource. They visit classrooms and explain gender diversity in an age-appropriate manner. They work with students to set up and develop student led activities, events and groups such as gay-straight alliances. They empower students to create cultural change in their schools—a school culture that condemns bullying and embraces gender diversity.

The Safe Schools program people also work with teachers to provide staff presentations, specialised training modules and workshops. They provide training materials that draw upon national and international research and best practice to give teachers and other school staff insights, ideas and confidence when working with LGBTIQ children.

I think where the program really comes into its own—the telling thing that resonates the most with me—is what it does for parents. Like many parents, I love my three children unconditionally. It does not scare me that they might identify as LGBTIQ. What scares me is that they might be teased, tormented or bullied for that. I recommend that anyone who is concerned about the program reads the testimonials of parents who have engaged with Safe Schools. Transitioning can be difficult no matter how much support you have, and Safe Schools is there for staff, students and parents for the long term. This assistance is invaluable for parents, and I am proud to offer my support to this program and its use in Queensland schools.