



Speech By  
**Hon. Grace Grace**


**MEMBER FOR MCCONNELL**

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## **EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL**

### **Second Reading**

 **Hon. G GRACE** (McConnel—ALP) (Minister for Education and Minister for Industrial Relations) (6.26 pm): I move—

That the bill be now read a second time.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to delivering a quality world-class education system in Queensland. We know that every day in classrooms right across the state Queensland teachers work hard to give our students the very best start in life. That is why we went to the last election with a commitment to raise the status of the teaching profession. It does not help when you often have governments, particularly at the national level, that continue to deliver statements which undermine the profession of teaching.

On 12 February 2019 I was proud to introduce the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Amendment Bill 2019 into the Queensland parliament. This is another example of the Palaszczuk government delivering on its commitment to transform and modernise the teaching profession under the Letting Teachers Teach initiative. This government firmly believes that teaching is a highly valued profession. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the wonderful hardworking teachers and principals in our schools right throughout Queensland for the excellent job that they do day in and day out. Unlike those opposite, we value teachers and the work they do. They work tirelessly every single day in our classrooms delivering what I describe time and time again as a world-class education here in this state. We believe that they deserve to be recognised and acknowledged for their hard work and professionalism. The Palaszczuk government wants teachers to have career development opportunities and they deserve to be well remunerated. The bill is a clear demonstration of this government's commitment to ensure a quality education system by providing outstanding teachers with new opportunities to advance their careers while allowing them to stay in the classroom.

The bill amends the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005 to provide for a nationally recognised certification framework in Queensland that recognises high-quality teachers and encourages them to continue their role as a classroom teacher; enable the Queensland College of Teachers—the college—to perform the role of a certified authority within the framework for the certification of highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers; and provide for an effective, transparent certification process with decisions subject to appropriate review.

The bill was referred to the Education, Tourism, Innovation and Small Business Committee for consideration. The committee tabled its report on 28 March 2019. The committee made a single recommendation: that the bill be passed. I would like to thank the chair, the member for Nudgee, and the committee members for their thorough consideration of the bill. As usual, the member for Nudgee

and committee members—particularly the member for Nudgee—did a great job and this bill was considered very well. I also take this opportunity to thank the departmental representative who assisted the committee with their consideration of the bill as well as the stakeholders who made submissions to the bill.

This bill is a positive step for teachers and the teaching profession as a whole. It is also a positive step for all Queenslanders, as the bill contributes to ensuring our state has a quality education system. I will say it again: world-class at that! This is an important step in raising the status of the teaching profession in Queensland and throughout the nation.

The Palaszczuk government has been comprehensive and meticulous in its introduction of a process to assess and certify highly accomplished and lead teachers. An investment of \$6 million over three years was allocated to implement a pilot program. This funding was used to support a small project team, the training and release of assessors, travel and accommodation, teacher relief and training for participants. Commencing in 2017, this pilot of the national certification process for HAT and lead teachers was trialled in the north coast and Far North Queensland education regions. In developing and assessing the certifying framework the Department of Education has worked closely with the college and the Queensland Teachers' Union.

In contrast to those opposite, the Palaszczuk government listens to, consults and works with Queenslanders. This pilot program has been recognised by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, AITSL, which acknowledged the incredible work by the department and the college and the national leadership shown in developing and implementing a certification process consistent with the national framework.

As a result of the incredible work that has gone into the pilot program, Queensland now has 44 certified highly accomplished teachers and three lead teachers recognised in our state schools. These 47 teachers span across the range of diverse education areas in our state schools. It is great to be able to acknowledge the education provided by teachers in special education, the early years and outdoor education as well as in primary and secondary schools. This spans across all areas.

Last year I was proud to announce that highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers will be able to earn around \$112,000 per year and \$122,000 per year respectively. It was fitting that two highly accomplished teachers in Helen Hamilton and Dwayne Rees and a lead teacher in Susan Scott were able to be present for the announcement. I acknowledge the member for Mount Ommaney, because we launched this at Jindalee State School. I particularly thank Principal Meaghan Rodgers, who welcomed us to the school, as well as the other members of the school community where we were able to launch this fantastic initiative of HA and lead teachers.

**Ms Pugh:** A great school.

**Ms GRACE:** I take that interjection from the member for Mount Ommaney: a great school. As a result of amendments contained in this bill, Helen, Dwayne and Susan, and many others like them, will have new opportunities to progress their careers while staying in the classroom.

For those teachers who have been certified as either a highly accomplished or a lead teacher, this bill incorporates transitional arrangements to ensure that those who were certified under the pilot continue to be recognised and not disadvantaged by the passing of this bill. Teachers who are teaching at the highly accomplished or lead teacher standard can be recognised as such and will be remunerated accordingly.

I spoke in detail about the bill in my explanatory speech, but I will briefly again outline its main features, because I think it is important for the teaching profession in this state. We want to acknowledge the high value of these wonderful professional people.

The bill provides a statutory framework which allows eligible teachers to apply to the college for certification as a highly accomplished or lead teacher. It also enables the college to assess applications and the applicant's professional practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers developed by AITSL, a national agency with the role of promoting excellence in the profession of teaching throughout Australia. These rigorous national standards recognise high-performing teaching across the domains of professional knowledge, practice and engagement. Mr Speaker, I know that you are well equipped to understand these issues.

In order to be recognised by AITSL and nationally, the assessment and certification process must meet the requirements set out by AITSL in its *Guide to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia*. This will be recognised nationally, which is fantastic. In assessing applications, the bill allows the college to be assisted by employing authorities; however, the college,

as an AITSL approved certifying authority, is the final independent decision-maker as to whether the teacher is certified as a highly accomplished or lead teacher. This is consistent with the current review processes of the college. I note that this approach was supported by all stakeholders in the committee process. I think they were very keen to see that this had been nationally recognised, that it was in line with those certifying principles and that this is the manner in which Queensland is stepping forward with this certification process. The bill also establishes a review framework for decisions of the college. If a person is dissatisfied with a decision of the college, they may seek an internal review of the decision by the college as well as an external review by the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The bill and the certification framework it gives effect to were informed by a two-year pilot conducted in two state school regions during 2017 and 2018, as I outlined previously. The college gained experience from the pilot in undertaking the certification process and has established procedures and capabilities that allow it to continue to perform the certifying role on an ongoing basis. Overall, amendments in the bill provide for a high-level yet rigorous framework suited to Queensland's education environment. It allows for an appropriate level of operational flexibility and adaptability to ensure the certification process can be practically implemented consistent with the national framework developed by AITSL.

I would now like to respond to a small number of issues raised by stakeholders during the committee's consideration of the bill. While the Queensland Catholic Education Commission supported the bill, it noted that the bill does not provide for revocation of certification. That was a good point. The certification process is designed to fit with the current national framework, which does not provide for revocation. Unfortunately, even though we may want to be able to do that, at the moment that is not provided for in the national framework. Implementing revocation in Queensland without a nationally consistent process would create a variety of operational issues that could undermine the effectiveness of such a policy.

My understanding is that the scheme is reviewed every five years and that this could be part of that five-year review. However, the government recognises that this is a matter that can be explored further with AITSL so that any revocation policy will be implemented consistently across the national framework. We just want to ensure that whatever we do in this area is nationally consistent and nationally recognised. I think it is so important for teachers to have confidence that it is a national scheme they are entering into. The Queensland Catholic Education Commission also acknowledged that further consultation with AITSL on this matter was the best approach. Eventually, it did agree that the government's approach was the best way forward. The government also notes the issues raised by the Queensland Independent Education Union, QIEU, that early childhood teachers in non-school environments are not eligible to apply to the college for certification.

In accordance with the Queensland government's commitment, the purpose of the bill is to enable registered teachers in Queensland schools to be able to apply to the college for certification, consistent with the processes evaluated under the pilot. We want registered teachers to be able to apply. Importantly, extensive consultation with the early childhood sector and stakeholders would need to occur should this change. There are a number of policy issues that would need to be resolved with the early childhood stakeholders, including private childcare employers, before it would be appropriate to consider extending the college's statutory functions to certifying early childhood teachers outside of a school setting. Even though we have sympathy for this, it is important to note that, outside of a school setting—outside of that registration—it would not be part of the national framework. If we wanted to go down that path, it really would require some extensive consultation. That is not to undermine the work that is done by teachers in early childhood education and care; it is just that we want to maintain that national framework. If we move in any direction in this way, we want to make sure that there is extensive consultation of all stakeholders should we decide to go down that path. That consultation will certainly occur by my department with all stakeholders involved in that area.

One of the many elements that would need to be considered is the potential cost impact on early childhood services employers and families. That is a significant part of this as well. Under the federal budget, which was just handed down, there is no long-term funding for early childhood education and care beyond another 12-month extension. This is the problem that the industry is facing: it cannot make any long-term plans—any concrete plans—in this industry without long-term concrete funding. Without that long-term concrete funding to determine what the teachers in that sector require long term without that funding certainty, how do we go down that track when all we are getting is year upon year of extended funding by the federal government for six years in a row? The federal government has been in government for six years and we have had six years of yearly extended year-by-year funding. It is just not good enough for this sector and I will keep calling on the federal government to give us long-term concrete funding for early childhood education and care so that we can not only look after those children in kindy and the year before kindy but also ensure that the staff have that career progression, that career

certainty and that career security that they currently do not have because of this yearly rolling over of funding and no long-term concrete funding. It is important for the sector and it was worth repeating that in this speech.

The Queensland Independent Education Union also raised that teachers from independent schools are not eligible to apply to the college for certification. This is because Independent Schools Queensland, ISQ, is also a certifying authority. It is a certifying authority in its own right and teachers in the independent school sector are already able to apply for certification through ISQ. My understanding is that that is the way that it wants it to continue at this point in time. The bill allows for future flexibility if this is required. If it changes its mind and it wants to come under the Queensland College of Teachers, it is able to do that, as an amendment can be made to the regulation to enable teachers in independent schools to be able to apply to the college for certification. After speaking with ISQ, it is happy with the arrangements that it has at the moment and we have assured it that, should that change—should it want to come under the QCT—we will be able to make a regulation change and it would be able to do that. At the moment teachers in the independent sector would be going to the ISQ for certification.

A quality education system is an essential foundation to an effective society. To ensure a quality education system, it is vital that we retain excellent teachers in the classrooms across the state. It is really heartening to see that, as part of the agreement, the landing of the pay rates for lead teachers and high-achieving teachers was sorted out between the government and the union and has provided for significant increases in salary as per the amounts that I outlined earlier in my speech. There is clear interest from state school teachers in the certification process. Since calls for expressions of interest were opened last year, the department has received more than 800 applications, demonstrating a high level of interest in engaging with the certification process in 2019. This expression of interest process will only be used by the Department of Education to gauge how many assessors will need to be trained to adequately review the number of applications this year.

Teachers who have not completed an expression of interest are not prevented from submitting an application—this was just an EOI—nor are those who have expressed interest locked into progressing an application in 2019. No-one is locked in or out. This was merely an expression of interest process so that we could see how many assessors we would need, what the numbers would be like and how successful this is going to be. We are very pleased with the 800 EOIs that we have received to date. It is expected that the number of interested teachers will fluctuate. As teachers become more informed about the process, there might be decisions to delay making an application in order to take more time to prepare a portfolio. Conversely, after knowing more about the process, teachers might decide that they are well placed to be successful with an application and apply without having previously expressed an interest. We just want to ensure that the message is out there—that is, once they learn about this, they are free to determine which way they want to go. Whether they want to continue, whether they want to come in or whether they want to stay out, it really is up to the teachers and we would encourage them in any way that they believe is the best way forward. To support those interested, the Department of Education and the Queensland College of Teachers are continuing to run workshops to provide further information and the government is ensuring that those workshops are really informative and provide some great information to assist our teachers right throughout the state.

In addition, the department has also developed a number of fact sheets to inform interested teachers about portfolio requirements and the certification process so that all applicants are fully aware of the rigorous standards prior to submitting an application, and they are quite rigorous. This is not something that is given lightly and hence the salary remuneration is quite commensurate with the work that needs to be done. A fact sheet has also been developed for school leaders to provide information on the process and clarity on how schoolteachers can support applicants in their decision to make an application.

The government is keenly aware that, with more applicants, there will be a need for more assessors, which are such an important part of this process. We want to make sure that those assessors are on the ground, that they are trained and that they are well equipped to take on the load. To address this, there is also information for educators who might be interested in being trained as assessors. It is clear that there has been considerable work in planning, developing and implementing the assessing and certification process. The trials went very well. There have been a number of trained assessors. The department has really crossed the t's and dotted the i's in this. We should all be very proud of the work that has happened to recognise our hardworking teachers so they can get certified as a lead teacher or as a highly accomplished teacher and that they are remunerated appropriately. We were able to get agreement, go to the commission with that agreement and get that agreement certified. Everyone is very clear about what is required. As I said, this is a rigorous process and it is one that the Department of Education and teachers right throughout Queensland should be very proud of and I commend them for their hard work in this area.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of John Ryan, the Director of the Queensland College of Teachers. John has demonstrated his passion for education and supporting teachers throughout his respected teaching career and extensive experience in the Department of Education. In 2006, John commenced his role as the inaugural director of the college. John has successfully led a number of reforms, initiatives and programs in Queensland, such as the introduction of professional standards for teachers, continuing professional development frameworks and a professional boundaries guideline. In addition, John has overseen the introduction of a range of technologically enhanced professional learning opportunities for Queensland teachers working in rural, regional and remote locations so that they have equitable access to the professional development that is required of contemporary teachers.

John is undoubtedly respected and held in high esteem by his education peers, having in 2015 been awarded the Excellence in Educational Leadership Award from the Australian Council for Educational Leaders and in 2018 receiving an award from the Australian Council of Deans of Education—the ACDE—for his outstanding contribution to education. Most recently, John led the work of the college in piloting systems for assessing and certifying highly accomplished and lead teachers. Under John's leadership, the college has been positioned as a leading regulator for the teaching profession in Australia. I would like to take this opportunity to wholeheartedly thank John for his dedication to education and distinguished years of service. He will be retiring soon and I wish him all the best in his retirement.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to Deanne Fishburn, who commences in the role of director of the college from 7 May. On behalf of the Queensland government, I once again wish John a very happy, fulfilling and long retirement and I warmly welcome Deanne Fishburn to the role as director of the college from 7 May. Deanne is a recognised national leader in teacher regulation in Australia. Her leadership in implementing the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in Queensland places her in a good position to continue the important work of the college.

Under the chairmanship of Professor Wendy Patton, the college is definitely in good hands. They do excellent work. It is a pleasure to be the Minister for Education with a college that produces such excellent teachers in this state and does such great work. Professor Wendy Patton really is an excellent chair. I thank her for the many years that she has been at the head of the Queensland College of Teachers.

The bill before the House provides for an effective framework that identifies excellent teachers and gives them the appropriate career opportunities without them having to leave the classroom. This is about keeping our very best teachers in the classroom. That is what we want to see. We want them in front of kids, where they want to be, doing what they love doing.

For Queensland to continue to deliver a world-class education and to give every child a great start, it is vital that we retain excellent teachers in our classrooms across the state. This bill gives these teachers the opportunity to apply for the nationally recognised career opportunity of becoming a highly accomplished or lead teacher. We are leading the nation with this initiative in Queensland. Recently, when I saw AITSL in Melbourne, they highly commended the work that Queensland has done in this area. They were super impressed with what we have done. They believe that we are the leaders in Australia in this area.

Teachers will now have an opportunity to take advantage of this initiative. We believe that the Queensland College of Teachers is the appropriate body to be the certifying authority. Teachers can appeal if a decision is not suited to them. Teachers will have full information with fact sheets, information and workshops on how they can go about attaining these qualifications. Teachers will be equipped with everything at their fingertips in order to put together a portfolio to gain accreditation as a highly accomplished or lead teacher. They can continue their successful careers in front of kids in the classroom.

Queensland delivers to our children in this state, no matter where they are, the highest quality education. Every member of this House should be proud of what we deliver in terms of world-class education in this state. As the Minister for Education, all I ever want is our fair share of funding. All I want is every dollar that we can get to be spent on those children in those classrooms every day. We want solid, concrete funding for early childhood education and care so that we can deliver in this state one of our priorities, which is to give every kid a great start to their life, to their education and to their role in society. I highly commend the bill to the House.