




Speech By
Jarrold Bleijie

MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Record of Proceedings, 4 April 2019

EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BLEIJIE** (Kawana—LNP) (3.59 pm), continuing: As we were discussing yesterday, the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Amendment Bill sets up the certification process for the Queensland College of Teachers to certify two new accreditations—highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers. As I indicated yesterday, the Liberal National Party opposition will be supporting those particular amendments in the bill because we believe in education. We believe that the best education our children and our students can get is when we have the very best of the best teaching our students.

As I said yesterday, the Liberal National Party has a history of supporting these sorts of reforms in that we were the party that introduced master teachers when we were last in government. Master teachers were well received right across the state schools because they saw it as an opportunity for the master teachers not only to have extra abilities but also to be mentors for other teachers, particularly young teachers coming into the system. We very much believe in the fundamentals of having the brightest teachers teaching our students.

It is concerning that we see standards slipping in NAPLAN. I have to put on record my concerns about the state of education in Queensland at the moment under the Palaszczuk Labor government. We see standards slipping. We see the NAPLAN results slipping. We saw at estimates last year with respect to particularly Indigenous communities the unacceptable levels in terms of their inability to read and write. We have seen nothing in the last 12 months from this Labor government to stop that occurring and to stop the slippage happening.

I have concerns that over the last 12 months particularly, as we have seen results in standards slipping, we have seen campaigns by unions in schools. We have seen campaigns for activism of our young students in our schools. The Queensland Council of Unions hide it under the guise of the Young Workers Hub. We know that the only reason the unions wanted to introduce that program was—and we recall the union head herself saying this—to activate students in our union political process, and that is unacceptable.

We are yet to hear if that program is being rolled out. The member for Currumbin and the member for Pumicestone prosecuted the issue of the Queensland Council of Unions and the Young Workers Hub in other inquiries of this parliament. We should know whether that program has been rolled out and which schools it has been rolled out to. I can say that the Liberal National Party will ensure, after October 2020, that we will not have the Young Workers Hub program in schools across Queensland. We will not allow unions to activate students. We will not allow unions to fly their flags on school fences and in the schoolyard.

We will not allow the unions to undertake such political activity, as we have clearly seen in the last few weeks, at schools right across Queensland, particularly Redcliffe State High School posting flyers about the union campaign incidentally weeks before a federal election. They say it is not a political campaign. When some of the Fair Funding Now! campaign material was distributed in the students' homework folders to take home, the Queensland Teachers' Union was on record saying that that was

a mistake and it should not happen. Yet last week when we found these flyers and signs on the fences and on the Facebook sites of state schools the union had a different view: 'The schools are able to do what they please.' The minister and the Premier even said that the Liberal National Party should be supporting them because that particular school was an independent public school. When we talk about autonomy for principals, there is a big difference between what we think giving autonomy to teachers, principals and students is and the Labor Party.

Ms Grace: Relevance.

Mr BLEIJIE: This is about having the best of the best teachers teach our students. The only way we are going to get the best of the best teaching our students is to ensure that they are a hundred per cent focused on educating, not on running union campaigns in our schools. I say again that the Liberal National Party does not support those sorts of Queensland Teachers' Union campaigns within our school environments. I have concerns that we have seen more recently under this government kids now not standing for the national anthem and kids going out on strike. I like to think that I was not at high school that long ago.

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I think we can allow some tolerance, but can we bring the member back to the long title of the bill? This is about HAT and lead teachers. I think relevance is a particular issue here at the moment. Could I seek your ruling please?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Member for Kawana, I bring you back to the long title of the bill, unless you can explain the relevance through the explanatory notes or the report.

Mr BLEIJIE: Indeed. When we look to the long title—an act to amend the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Act 2005—this whole bill is about education standards and it is about the certification of lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers. I am making the point that it is no use having highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers if they cannot get on and do that particular job if there are external influences like the Queensland Teachers' Union and union campaigns being run in our schools.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Kawana, I would say that you have made that point. Move on to other matters.

Mr BLEIJIE: We saw two weeks ago statistics released by the Labor government with respect to assaults on our teachers, our highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers. Assaults are going up. We have to ask ourselves why? Why are students attacking teachers? Why are we allowing students not to stand for the national anthem? Why are we allowing our students to walk off school premises? It is no use having lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers if the kids are not even at school. We are now allowing students to strike. The Minister for Education, also a former union official herself—

Ms GRACE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am a very patient person and I think we can allow some leeway. Please can I get your ruling on relevance to the bill? This is about changing the Queensland College of Teachers to become assessors for HAT and lead teachers. It has nothing to do with the issues that the member for Kawana is speaking about. Please can I get your ruling on relevance?

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Ms Grace: A point of order on yourself?

Mr BLEIJIE: No. The standing orders allow a point of order to be taken to address a point of order by another member. Mr Deputy Speaker, the essence of the bill is the certification process for lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers. The point I was making and the relevance of it is that, if you do not have students in the school and they are not there because they are striking, it is no use having lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think you have been allowed a little bit of leeway. I ask you to come back to the subject matter of the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: The other concern I have with respect to having highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers is how the teachers discipline students. We have seen a slide in the discipline standards across education in Queensland as well.

Mr Perrett: They don't like what they're hearing.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take that interjection because the member for Gympie knows all too well that the Liberal National Party supports students, schools, teachers and autonomy in our schools, and we are supporting the bill. We believe that, as I made the point, we have to have the best of the best teaching

our students. We have seen the NAPLAN results and the sliding scales of NAPLAN. This is why we support the bill so much. We want the very best teachers teaching our kids to fix the issues that are happening in education under the Labor government at the moment.

I have fantastic schools in my electorate, as all members would have in their electorates. There is Meridan State College, Talara Primary College, Currimundi State School, Pacific Lutheran College, Kawana Waters State College and Buddina State School. These schools are doing amazing things in the Kawana electorate.

As I made the point yesterday, when the Liberal National Party introduced master teachers under the Great Results Guarantee, many of those schools took up that opportunity and had master teachers. I make the point that what is good for one school might not necessarily be good for another school. That is why we do not believe in the centralist policies of Education Queensland doing everything from central office, because what might be good for the minister's school in her electorate might not necessarily be needed or good for a school in my electorate because each school has individual needs. Across Queensland, as the minister knows, there might be schools with more of a multicultural focus depending on their geographical location in Queensland.

We have to allow schools to adjust to those different demands and opportunities. I know that when schools have the freedom and autonomy to be able to do that they take it by the reigns and it benefits the students, because if you apply the same rules across all schools in Queensland it does not work. The principals, the school community, the P&Cs, the P&Fs know what is in the best interests of their school students, not necessarily the bureaucrats in Brisbane. I will always trust the school leaders, the principals and the community to be able to work out what is in the best interests of the school, the school community and what ultimately is going to be in the best interests of the students because this is what this is all about.

We have seen many reforms over the last few years supported by both sides of politics. We have seen the introduction of prep—prep to year 12 colleges now—and the middle schooling program that was introduced years ago. There is opportunity for bipartisanship in the education space. As I said yesterday, we will give that when it is well deserved, but we will point out when there are failings of the Labor government with respect to their priorities and when we believe their priorities are wrong, and I have mentioned a few before.

There are other issues in the education space at the moment with respect to occupational therapists. Occupational therapists who work in our school environments are not paid the same amount as occupational therapists in the health system and I believe they should be. Ultimately, I think that having lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers is good. As I said to the minister last night in the chamber, the committee noted in its report that there were some 500 expressions of interest for lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers. I was worried when the pilot program was originally introduced that everyone would get the participation stamp or the registration for highly accomplished teacher, which was not the case. I think that is good because if we did that it would not be rewarding the best of the best.

As the committee report notes, 184 applied. By the end of 2018 at the conclusion of the pilot program, 44 teachers were successfully certified as highly accomplished teachers and three were successfully certified as lead teachers. We must ensure now that the pilot program is finished that the certification process takes place. The Queensland College of Teachers will be the certification authority. In terms of independent schools, I know that Independent Schools Queensland, ISQ, is already a registered certification authority. I have no concerns with respect to that.

When all these new highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers are employed, we need to ensure that is not at the expense of schools. In the committee report I note that the department pays for teachers' salaries. We want to ensure that the department does not change policies with respect to that; that the department pays additional salaries and they are not taken out of existing school budgets.

I would love to see a day where these highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers can teach in air-conditioned state classrooms, but the only way they will be able to have that learning and work environment is by electing a Liberal National Party government in 2020, because our policy is to air-condition every state school classroom in Queensland no matter where you live. In talking about workplaces, I think it is vitally important because I do think it impacts on the ability to work particularly in the hot summer. That is why parliament is air-conditioned, our offices are air-conditioned, minister's offices are air-conditioned—

Ms LINARD: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order on relevance. I ask that you bring the member back to the bill. It is quite clear in the long title that it is the Queensland College of Teachers amendment bill. He is straying again. I ask for your ruling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Weir): Order! We are talking about the College of Teachers so I bring you back to the bill at hand.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. The whole bill introduces lead teachers and highly accomplished teachers. It is hard not to talk about highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers if you do not talk about their workplaces.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! Member for Kawana, if you cannot identify it in the green or in the committee report then I would ask that you come back to the bill.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ms Grace: You are struggling.

Mr BLEIJIE: I take the interjection from the minister. For a bill that has bipartisan support, I know why they have taken so many interjections. They do not believe in air-conditioning state school classrooms. They do not believe in stopping kids striking. We support the bill. We support highly accomplished teachers. We want to air-condition our classrooms. We want to make sure the very brightest of the brightest teach our children, and the only way they can do that is to have cool classrooms. Elect the LNP government in 2020.