



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MOUNT OMMANEY

Record of Proceedings, 4 April 2019

EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

Ms PUGH (Mount Ommaney—ALP) (5.45 pm): This bill is about letting excellent teachers teach. It is keeping them in the classroom. We know that our excellent teachers do not always stay in the classroom. Sometimes they end up in parliament like the member for Mansfield or the member for Townsville. I know we have quite a few teachers on this side of the House. We want to make sure we keep as many high-quality teachers who offer high-quality teaching in our classrooms. That is why the Queensland government's commitment in this bill is so important.

The government's 2015 commitment was to transform and modernise the teaching profession. We want to see high-quality state school teachers recognised for their work inside the classroom. We want to create a pathway to keep them in the classroom. That means establishing the two new classifications of highly accomplished teacher and lead teacher—the HATs and the LTs. I notice there is a lot of cross-chamber chatter. I hope it is about members' favourite teachers.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms McMillan): Thank you, member for Mount Ommaney. You raise an important point. Let us keep the cross-chamber chatter to a minimum and pay respect to the member on their feet.

Ms PUGH: Thank you for your protection, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thank Minister Grace for coming out to my electorate and making the very exciting announcement about this bill in my beautiful electorate of Mount Ommaney. She came to my largest school—Jindalee State School. We made the announcement about this exciting piece of legislation there alongside principal, Meaghan Rodgers, who, as I mentioned earlier today, is sadly leaving us. We are all devastated to lose her.

I acknowledge that there is bipartisan support for this bill, although we might not know it from the back and forth we have had in the chamber today. Member for Townsville, I have reflected on several of my MVP teachers. I have to give a shout-out to my year 12 leader Gary O'Brien who tried desperately to teach us all maths and told us it was the universal language. That really stayed with me. I do not know how much he improved my maths grades but I did not fail, so that is something. Well done, Mr O'Brien. We all have an MVP story, I am sure.

As the member for Mount Ommaney I know that approximately three per cent of my local constituents are teachers or work in schools in teacher aide roles or similar. That is a large chunk. That is about 1,000 people in my local community who are actually working in schools, and I have countless more parents.

As a parent I can attest firsthand to the amazing dedication of our local state schools. I am a proud Middle Park mum. Two days ago I did my parent-teacher conference over the phone with my children's teachers. Shortly after that I actually received a little report card about where they were up to not just with their schoolwork but with a number of other things. If it was not clear before, it is apparent now that our teachers are managing not just our children's learning but their emotional development, their social development, their friendships and their precious self-esteem at a really tender age.

As I said, my son's teacher did not just tell me how his year 1 maths is developing but also how he is very self-assured, he is very inclusive of all of the kids in his class and he really goes out of his way to include the kids who are socially isolated. Teachers do so much more than grade kids in the classroom. This bill goes such a long way to recognising the full-scale approach that they take to managing our children's education and their overall welfare. I think that that is so important to do.

When we get an exceptional teacher like I think my kids have, we need to do everything we possibly can to keep those teachers in the classroom. That means that they continue to play a direct role in shaping the hearts and the minds of our littlest Queenslanders right there in the classroom because, as I have noted, we do often lose them higher up the chain to office roles, to admin roles and to parliament. If you are serving with distinction in your community, one of the highest compliments you can get is, 'You're doing a really good job. You'll do wonderfully well in regional office.' We need our good teachers right where we can see them—teaching our littlest Queenslanders. This bill recognises and remunerates the excellent work that our teachers do and ensures that we have quality teaching happening in our classrooms.

As a parent, I can never thank our teachers enough for the work that they do. As I have said, I was really quite amazed with this interim report that I got, covering off on a vast spectrum of things that a lot of people would say are essentially unrelated to teaching. It is not about maths and it is not about science; it is actually about my children's emotional and social development. We know that, if those factors and criteria are not being met in the classroom, the kids will not be doing their best learning because they will not be empowered to put their best foot forward in the classroom.

As a parent, I can never thank our teachers enough. My children's teachers have worked through a number of difficult issues with me over the years, and we have done that side by side with constant communication. It has happened a lot outside working hours, and I really do commend them for that. As a parliamentarian, I am really excited to vote for this legislation to ensure that we do keep our top teachers in the classroom and that they do get the remuneration they deserve. It is worth noting that in the past, and I think to this day, teaching has been a profession with a high number of women. It is really important that we do the right thing and ensure that these wonderful school leaders get the remuneration they deserve.

I want to finish by noting a couple of things that I have observed in the classrooms I have been in over the years. The teaching profession has such a profound and lifelong impact on all of our young people. I commend this bill to the House because I simply cannot think of a profession more worthy of this recognition than our wonderful and hardworking teachers.