




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 4 April 2019

EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (5.38 pm): I rise to make a contribution to this bill which allows the skills of our high-performing teachers to be recognised. Everyone in this House would agree that one of the most honourable and important professions is teaching. Teachers provide the absolute framework and ability for our next generation to become either teachers or tomorrow's doctors, accountants or farmers. It is important that we continue to recognise that teachers play an important role.

It is hoped that the recognition of their special accomplishments will encourage them to continue as classroom teachers. One of the biggest issues we have in rural and remote areas is keeping teachers in those areas and having those teachers recognised for their great efforts so they stay in rural and remote areas.

I know that the previous speaker, the member for Townsville, was a teacher at Springsure State School—a fantastic school. We need to continue to reward teachers with these sorts of programs so they stay in the teaching profession. If they marry a local and they cannot move and their next step is to go in to administration to get extra pay I think we need to do what we can to keep them in the classroom. We need to have great teachers.

Being the member for Gregory has given me a knowledge of and a sense of duty towards virtually every model of education on offer in Queensland. I have 58 schools in my electorate encompassing state schools, private schools, large schools, small schools, urban schools, rural schools, special education hubs and, very importantly, schools of distance education. If there is something good happening in education I will see that reflected in Gregory. If there is a problem in education I will see that in the electorate as well.

A unique feature of Gregory's schools is that many teachers are also parents, and all teachers care deeply about their school and their community. This has not been properly recognised. In order to progress their careers many teachers in regional areas feel forced to relocate. I have seen this time and time again. If they do not relocate to get a better understanding of their worth they move into administration.

Some teachers who come out to country areas stay in those areas, which is fantastic. They marry local people—local graziers, local farmers. They bring with them excellent teaching skills, but we need to recognise them. We need to make sure that they are recognised in this program.

There is also a significant body of teachers who cannot take up a promotion that involves relocation because of their family's business or personal commitments in their regional community or town. In many ways, this means we find the most amazing teachers across schools in regional Queensland, and particularly in Gregory. Those teachers are not being recognised professionally or financially for their accomplishments.

It is also short-sighted. Gregory is a proving ground for many young graduate teachers every year. Our children benefit so much from their enthusiasm, but they come to us at a time when they are still gaining the hours of practical experience they need to fully develop. Classroom contact hours will help develop professional judgement and self-confidence.

In my observation, what is absolutely vital for them is good classroom mentoring by an accomplished classroom teacher. I must congratulate the minister for the attention she has given to improving the access of all teachers to continuing professional development, right up to mentoring for new principals. I can tell her, I can already see and hear the benefits across Gregory's campuses.

For all these formal initiatives, there is still the need for one-on-one mentoring for new teachers by experienced teachers and for that valuable one-on-one modelling of classroom management methods and teaching technology. Unfortunately, the system has been geared to strip classrooms of the most talented teachers so not only do our students lose out but so does every cohort of graduate teachers.

They lose those classroom mentors and models because the only way to recognise these great teachers is to promote them out of their classrooms. It is hard in rural and regional areas. When we have good teachers in Bedourie or Birdsville—those small communities—we have to keep those good teachers in those towns.

I have seen it firsthand. In a small community—and, Madam Deputy Speaker McMillan, you will understand this being a teacher yourself—not only are they a teacher but they are a community leader. They provide mentoring not only for other teachers but for students as well. They play an active role in formulating a child's foundations to be a successful person in the future. We need to reward our rural and remote teachers because they play a significant role. We need our accomplished teachers spread across our classrooms in Queensland. Every parent knows it. Every teacher knows it.

From time to time, often on World Teachers' Day, we will hear radio programs ask callers about a special teacher who changed their life. For me it was the deputy headmaster at Toowoomba Grammar School at the time, Ron Bourne, and the late, great William Dent, the then headmaster at Toowoomba Grammar School. They taught me one thing. They taught me to back myself. They taught me that you have to back yourself in every situation. I thank those gentlemen for doing that. I guess for them it was a situation where they had all these country kids coming down to the school and living away from their parents. Theirs was not only a teaching performance but also a parent performance in the classroom. One thing they taught me was to back yourself. Ever since then I have backed myself.

The final thing I want to stress is the importance of retaining teachers in rural and remote areas through this program. I encourage the minister to come out to Bedourie, Birdsville and the one-teacher schools. I know the member for Burdekin faces the same challenges I face. He now has in his electorate a school which I am very close to—Mistake Creek State School. It is one of the most fantastic schools anyone will come across. We need to keep teachers there. I certainly commend this bill to the House.