




Speech By
Samuel O'Connor

MEMBER FOR BONNEY

Record of Proceedings, 30 April 2019

EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr O'CONNOR** (Bonney—LNP) (12.09 pm): Good teachers should be able to stay in the classroom without having to try to get a higher position to be paid more. We need to help them to do what they do best. That is the best form of investment we can make in our education system. The Education (College of Teachers) Amendment Bill before us will help deliver that. It is about letting our best teachers earn a similar amount to what they would earn if they were to take on a leadership role. Those roles are more administrative and have a lot more responsibilities that rightly do not allow the people in them to spend time in a classroom.

The framework set out by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership allows for a progression from graduate to proficient to highly accomplished to lead teacher. We need to change the Education (College of Teachers) Act because, at the moment, the college cannot certify high-performing teachers when they aspire to and decide to put themselves forward to be a highly accomplished teacher or a lead teacher. Over the past couple of years in North Queensland a trial of this program saw 44 highly accomplished teachers and three lead teachers certified. It is fantastic to see 750 expressions of interest received for this year. Certification allows highly accomplished teachers to earn \$111,725 and lead teachers to earn \$121,975, which is a significant jump on the standard classroom teacher wage. The cost for teachers to apply will be \$850, \$650 if they progress to the second stage and then \$100 for every five years afterwards to renew.

A few weeks ago I met with local representatives from the Queensland Teachers Union who told me about what they are looking for in their EB9 campaign. Their biggest issues include salaries, how under the current system the gaps are too tight between lead teachers and principals, their workload, how much they do in their own time and promotional positions. I heard them out and I have no doubt that the government will give them a fair hearing as well.

I am proud of the schools in my area and the teachers who lead them. Every day they go above and beyond for our young people. I hope the system that this bill sets up will be taken up by Gold Coast teachers. I will mention a few examples of going above and beyond, which this new system will acknowledge.

Most days I have dealings with Labrador State School, because it is across the road from my office. Its principal is Steve Josey and he cares deeply for our Labrador kids. I am proud to work with him on some of their great community programs and extra initiatives that improve student wellbeing at the school, put them at ease to begin learning and make a difference to their whole being, not just their academic performance. One example is the brains, body and confidence program, which is run on a Friday morning. I have to add that my relationship with Mr Josey extends to being able to discuss at length the latest Marvel movies, such as *Avengers: Endgame*. He will be very happy that I have brought that up.

I represent one of the largest primary schools on the Gold Coast, Arundel State School. Its principal, Mike Kelly, shows his experience through the systems he has been able to bring in to make sure that every student is cared for, no matter what level they are at in their learning journey. Arundel students are encouraged by every teacher to Be Safe, Be Respectful, Be a Learner. Their hugely improved academic performance over the years is a testament to that, which is also seen in the young leaders that they are producing.

Julie-Anne McGuinness is at Musgrave Hill State School. She brings a unique style of leadership to a school that is valued by parents for its relatively small size and family feel. Musgrave Hill State School teachers show commitment and perseverance and its values based culture lets the students thrive.

There are two high schools in my electorate. Coombabah State High School is led by Chris Kern. He has driven his team to deliver outstanding sports and leadership programs. I have been fortunate to be involved in their northern collegiate program, which gives students with leadership potential the opportunity to hear from leaders, discuss strategies and methods, and learn from mentors.

Southport State Independent Public School is led by Executive Principal Nigel Hughes. Over the past decade the school has risen to be one of the most accomplished high schools on the Gold Coast. The teachers have worked hard in their specialisations, giving the school the second best overall result for the Gold Coast in terms of OPs and it is among the best in Queensland. I think they came fifth overall. The school's independent public school status has given it the freedom to personalise the school to get the best outcomes for its students.

Finally, I mention the excellence in education at Southport Special School, which is led by Susan Christensen who last year joined a committed teaching staff and parent collective at what is one of Queensland's largest special schools. The care that is shown to each student is outstanding. It gives confidence to parents that their students are treated with respect and dignity, and are being given every possible opportunity. Last year I had the great honour of attending the school's graduation ceremony. There were very few people in the room not moved to tears, myself included.

I have been lucky enough to be involved with all of those schools and at each I have seen teachers who would be ideal candidates for highly accomplished or lead teacher. They are educators who are so committed to their students that they need to stay in the classroom for their kids' sake, and also for the sakes of those less experienced teachers around them. New graduates are helped by learning from highly accomplished educators who are still in the classroom and can lead junior teachers by example.

I will wrap up by paying tribute to another outstanding teacher, my sister Emily O'Connor. Emily teaches grade 4 at Leichhardt State School. The lengths that Em goes to for the kids she teaches is simply extraordinary. Her students have a lot of difficulties, especially at home, and her commitment to them goes well past the classroom. I have known Em to buy them lunch if they come to school without food. She has helped to raise money to send kids to camp at Tallebudgera. Many of the kids at that school have never been to the beach. Like many teachers, my sister is an incredible role model. Those teachers do not work for the money, but if they want to stay in the classroom and continue to do the work that they love they should not have to choose between that and taking up another position that would take them away from it. I look forward to this system being implemented.