




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

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MOTION

Schools, Free Meals

 **Ms LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (5.30 pm): I rise to speak against this motion moved by the Greens in this place.

Ms Grace: I moved an amendment.

Ms LAUGA: I support the amendment that was moved by the minister. We all want our kids to start the day on a full stomach. There is no question about that. We know that it is important so they can concentrate. We know that it is important to their success at school and to their learning. We can definitely all agree on that. We can all agree that, when it comes to the education system and teachers, schools are a really important place for young people to learn and to be nurtured. That is why we already have wonderful programs in place in over 700 schools across the state providing breakfast for those students who need assistance.

We will continue to expand these programs as required, based on need, because we know that they work wonders. We can all agree that we want every child to get a great start and we do not, and will not, let kids fall through the cracks for want of a good breakfast or lunch. That does not mean that we need to adopt the Greens' thought bubble—or avid Google search, as the member for Bundaberg put it—to spend \$374 million a year to provide breakfast to every child in every school in the state.

Ms Grace: It is just 30 per cent.

Ms LAUGA: It is only 30 per cent of the students in the state. I effectively consider this as a serious form of a virtue signalling. It is a rush for parents and carers to get their children out of bed and ready for school, to get them fed and then to get them to school—I know that firsthand; packing lunches is one of my least favourite chores in the world.

Honourable members: Hear, hear!

Ms LAUGA: I hear the agreement of all the parents in the chamber. We should not be stepping in when parents and carers are more than capable of providing breakfast or where the community is coming up with its own solutions. When it equates to only \$1.50 per child, what kind of nutritious meal are you going to provide for \$1.50?

I believe that we should be aspiring to ways in which we can support parents better. If we are going to solve this problem of poverty in our state and in our country, we need to do that through self-determination. We need to do that by raising the minimum wage. We need to do that by helping to support parents to get a job and by giving them the skills and experience to get those jobs. We need to help parents with more affordable child care and more childcare places. All of those practical changes would make a much bigger difference to the lives of parents and in turn their children in this state than a thought bubble.

Mr Berkman: So what are you doing on that?

Ms LAUGA: We are doing lots of things on that actually. It is one of my great passions. I would suggest that a motion in support of more affordable and accessible child care would perhaps have been a better motion to debate in this place. I think that most parents would agree.

Schools, in consultation with their community, can choose to operate a breakfast program to provide meals for families in need. I invite the member for Maiwar and the member for South Brisbane to my Alma Mater at Mount Archer State School in the electorate of Keppel where my mum has been a teacher for over 30 years. There has been a breakfast program running there since I was in school. I am no spring chicken anymore. That breakfast program has been a great success. There are plenty of parents like my mum who got me out of bed every day, gave me a good breakfast and sent me along to school with lunch. I am very privileged that my mum was able to do that because she had a good job. She had the benefit of being able to go to university—the first in her family. She raised me with that same principle as well—that is, the principle of the responsibility of the family and the carer and the parents in that family.

In 2020, 727 state schools offered a breakfast program of some description—more than half of our schools. Yet the Greens are only talking about 30 per cent of our schools.

Mr Berkman: Thirty per cent of students! Read the motion.

Ms LAUGA: Thirty per cent of students. I suggest that the members who moved this motion have probably never been to a school in a remote area to see how this would roll out in any of those schools. Perhaps the member for Maiwar and the member for South Brisbane need to get out of their Brisbane bubble and understand how regional and remote schools work, how parents work in those communities and what would actually make a bigger difference to their lives than this ill-thought-out policy. I do not support the motion.