




Speech By
Lachlan Millar

MEMBER FOR GREGORY

Record of Proceedings, 10 October 2023

ADJOURNMENT

Western Queensland, School Sport; NAPLAN Remedial Learning

 **Mr MILLAR** (Gregory—LNP) (7.25 pm): I am so glad that the Minister for Education is here to hear this. On behalf of the parents and the students of Gregory schools, I speak briefly to raise two issues causing considerable concern. The North West Queensland School Sport District is currently under review—and has been for some time—but there is yet to be any meaningful consultation with the school P&Cs about the proposed changes. School sporting districts are where our young people go to compete at a district level. The boundaries of these districts dictate the centres in which they compete. For instance, students of the Longreach School of Distance Education attend district sports competitions mainly in Longreach and sometimes in Mount Isa. This allows as many students as possible to qualify and attend as these are the geographical regional hubs for many small western communities and remote and rural properties.

The current proposals seek to amalgamate Central Western schools into larger sporting districts around distant cities on the coast, with no option of travelling there by air. This means children as far west as Windorah or Birdsville who qualify to compete at a district level will have to be able to travel to Gladstone, Rockhampton or Mackay to compete. Unless they are lucky enough to have a parent or a guardian to drive them the 14 hours required, they will not be able to compete. Furthermore, this means they need a parent who can be absent from their work for over a week and who also earns sufficient to fund both travel and accommodation out of the family budget.

Coastal competitors suffer no such disadvantage. This is unfair and a real barrier for talented Western Queensland children who want to participate in district competitions to develop the skills such competition brings. I ask the minister to urgently direct the department to reconsider this or fully fund arrangements to ensure Gregory children do not have an unfair barrier placed on their path to sporting development.

On another topic, the value of the NAPLAN scheme was highlighted again this year with children's results either reassuring parents and teachers that a child was on track or showing where learning gaps exist so they can be closed before the child progresses through the system next year. I have been concerned to hear from parents that the funding for remedial learning support does not seem to be separate from funding for learning support for children with disabilities. This means a child who needs some support for literacy or numeracy in year 3 may not receive adequate support if his or her school's budget is already fully committed to supporting inclusive education due to a higher number of enrolments this year. These must be separate budget items for every Queensland school, otherwise it is luck of the draw for our kids.