




Speech By
Dr Christian Rowan

MEMBER FOR MOGGILL

Record of Proceedings, 10 September 2024

EDUCATION (GENERAL PROVISIONS) (HELPING FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL COSTS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROWAN** (Moggill—LNP) (5.48 pm): As the Liberal National Party's shadow minister for education, I rise to address the debate on the Education (General Provisions) (Helping Families with School Costs) Amendment Bill 2023. The Liberal National Party will not be supporting this legislation. In fact, the Liberal National Party opposes this bill.

We know that Queenslanders are doing it tough as a result of Labor's ongoing cost-of-living crisis. Whilst the Liberal National Party certainly acknowledges the intent of this bill in proposing to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for families of schoolchildren and students, the Liberal National Party state opposition holds a number of significant reservations pertaining to how this legislation has been prepared and the associated lack of comprehensive information, details and appropriate consideration of legislative and budgetary implications.

Having been examined by the Queensland parliament's Education, Employment, Training and Skills Committee, this proposed legislation remains vague as to the means by which the state government is to implement measures to address out-of-pocket expenses associated with attending state schools in Queensland. I note that the parliamentary committee expressed its concerns that the legislation's requirement that the minister introduces a subsequent bill to enact its objectives might place the minister in conflict with their collective cabinet responsibilities.

Throughout the parliamentary committee's inquiry it was also found that the Department of Education could not fully cost the implications of this legislation and that, given the scope of the cost of the extracurricular activities the department could be required to meet if the legislation is passed, the cost could be 'potentially limitless'. Ultimately, the parliamentary committee found that it was not satisfied that the objectives of this legislation could or should be met and, accordingly, recommended that this legislation not be passed. It must be noted that, despite this legislation requiring considerable additional and potentially unlimited financial investment from the state government, at no stage, neither within the explanatory notes nor in submissions, could the Greens member for South Brisbane articulate the estimated cost to implement the measures contained in the bill.

The Greens political party certainly has form when it comes to its failure to grasp even the most basic economic principles and deliver comprehensive and costed policies. As a case in point, this legislation fails to distinguish between what is core funding and what is not. No meaningful detail has been provided in relation to what items should be funded by the state government and what items would not be funded. While it is clear that the legislation seeks to have the state government meet the costs of student resources, uniforms and compulsory excursions, it is unclear if selective extracurricular activities such as overseas travel for STEM and robotics events or interstate sporting competitions would also have all costs met by the state government.

The legislation clearly intends for the state government to cover all costs for student resources, uniforms and compulsory excursions. As has been identified, there is a substantial lack of clarity on whether selective extracurricular activities such as overseas travel for STEM and robotics events or even interstate sporting competitions would also be funded. The absence of such important detail could lead to confusion as well as any number of unintended consequences including the inconsistent application of funding and arbitrary determination of what is and is not covered.

Finally, can I clearly state that our public state school education system is critically important for all. As the state member for Moggill, I want local parents and families to be able to access our public state schools, whether they be primary or secondary, and to have that access and availability locally and on a continual basis, both now and into the future.

There is no doubt that there are significant concerns about existing local school infrastructure in the western suburbs of Brisbane. The delivery of a new high school for the electorate of Moggill is critically needed. It also has to be noted that if we are to truly achieve the outcome of fully funding all of our Queensland public state schools then the federal Albanese Labor government must step up and provide the required funding to our state jurisdiction of Queensland.

As I have heard the contribution in this debate from the Greens member for South Brisbane, what has to be asked is: where are the federal Greens members for Ryan, Brisbane and Griffith when it comes to approaching the federal government and championing that additional funding being provided by the federal Labor government? Those federal Greens members had preference deals at the last federal election and it is important that they do that work in Canberra. It is important that federal Greens members of the lower house, and senators for that matter, step up to the mark and champion that in Canberra. To date, we have not seen that occur at all.

I want to be clear and reiterate that the Liberal National Party acknowledges the considerable strain that Labor's cost-of-living crisis is placing on Queensland families. The Liberal National Party will always support comprehensive and well-developed measures which can meaningfully ease the significant burden of mounting cost-of-living expenses. It is incumbent on the state government to be proactive in tackling the cost-of-living crisis by further addressing those areas of the family budget that the state Labor government can influence.

There is no question that the state government must do more to assist Queenslanders with what has become a debilitating cost-of-living crisis. This legislation, however, is not a solution to that problem and the Liberal National Party does not believe that the legislation, in its current form, will be able to achieve its stated objectives.