




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.04 pm): It is interesting to follow the member for Miller. I have to remind him and the Labor government that in my time as a member here they have closed three schools in my electorate—Lundavra, Bungunya and Tannymorel. Those communities are now—

Mr Millar: They closed Bungunya! That is where I went to school.

Mr LISTER: Your school has been closed. We are not going to see any more Lachy Millars generated by that particular school which is a real shame. Those communities have lost their schools. I would also say in response to the member for Miller that I do not see too many 50-cent fares in my electorate. In fact the roads are falling apart, so where is all the money for that when we hear about progressive coal royalties?

In talking about this bill, I can understand what the Greens want to achieve and how this might go down well in their electorates. What this bill does not provide is what is significant. It is significant for the things which it would deny the communities that I represent. I do not have affluent communities full of activists who would love to see the world change and hope that everyone can be like them. I represent communities that do it tough, communities with low incomes—far lower than most of the Labor Party electorates and certainly the Greens electorates in this place. Their kids go to state schools that have inbuilt disadvantage. I do not necessarily criticise the government on this point because running small schools in isolated areas is an expensive business, but it is a necessary business.

I represent communities where young students, as young as preppies, spend 45 minutes on a bus to get to school in the morning. I represent communities where students in order to go to years 10, 11 and 12 have to hop on a bus for half an hour or more each way. I represent communities with schools where the funding that has been proposed—and it would be a bonanza—

Ms McMILLAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I am concerned that the member is pre-empting debate on a bill that will follow this one. I ask for your ruling.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Kelly): I will take some advice. At this point we do not believe there is a point of order. I ask the member for Southern Downs to be mindful that there is another bill that deals with remote schools on the *Notice Paper*. I note that it is quite a specific bill as in there are specific aspects to that bill. I will listen to your contribution.

Mr LISTER: Thank you and I will be mindful of your guidance. Those schools in my electorate suffer other disadvantages. The government announced—and I lauded them at the time—significant funding to provide GPs and allied health and counselling for students at schools, but that does not apply in my electorate because it is impossible to recruit the staff to deliver that. I think about how this bill proposes to enrich the lives and experiences of students probably in metropolitan areas, but it will do nothing for children at a school which is in want of those services.

One particular principal of a prep to year 10 school in my electorate made the point that increasingly young students are now having to access what was funding for the high school students for counselling to deal with trauma and so forth. That is going down through grades 6, 5, 4 and 3. We are getting students who are very young coming to school without having had breakfast who are traumatised from their experiences at home. This bill will do nothing to assist them.

There are many schools in my electorate—there are 40-odd schools in the electorate of Southern Downs—and many of them are small schools with a limited number of students. It is not possible to provide the same breadth of opportunities at those schools as you might experience in a larger school. Access to music or other specialist subjects and opportunities is limited. It is catered for to the very best of the ability of the teachers in those clusters who share resources. I have seen some wonderful work to make sure the best possible opportunities are obtained by students in those small schools.

This bill will do nothing to assist in that regard. This bill will do nothing to reduce the amount of time that a preppie spends on a bus going to and from school every day. This will not add an extra music teacher to a school that has only one teacher because the principal is the teacher. This will not provide for a psychologist or a school nurse in a remote school which has a lower socio-economic demographic and a higher index of need than many of the schools which occupy the affluent electorates held by the Greens. There is nothing in it for the people of Southern Downs to support this bill and I will be joining my party, the LNP, in opposing it.