



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CURRUMBIN

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EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF TEACHERS) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs STUCKEY** (Currumbin—LNP) (4.24 pm): On 12 February 2019 the Minister for Education introduced the Education (Queensland College of Teachers) Amendment Bill 2019 into the Queensland parliament. The bill was subsequently referred to the Education, Employment and Small Business Committee for detailed consideration and a reporting date of 28 March. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and thank the chair for her kind words. I would also like to thank the departmental staff and our hardworking secretariat. It is nice to have an education bill, especially one that attracted bipartisan support. There was only one recommendation and that was that the bill be passed.

The committee received a public briefing from the department on 25 February and held a public hearing here in Brisbane on 13 March. There were five submissions, and they were from the Queensland Teachers' Union, the Queensland College of Teachers, Independent Schools Queensland, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and the Independent Education Union of Australia—Queensland and Northern Territory Branch. These same five submitters were also witnesses at our public hearing, and I thank them for their time and valuable input. The explanatory notes state that the objectives of the bill are to—

- create a certification process in Queensland, consistent with a national framework, that recognises high performing teachers and encourages them to continue their role as a classroom teacher;
- enable the Queensland College of Teachers ... to perform the role of certifying authority for the certification of highly accomplished teachers and lead teachers; and
- provide for an effective, transparent certification process, with decisions subject to appropriate review.

Importantly, this bill presents a national approach towards the recognition of high performing teachers in an attempt to encourage them to continue as classroom teachers. Developed over several years through councils of education ministers and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, this framework was endorsed in April 2012. The approach to certification is informed by principles such as being standards based, having a student improvement focus and being development driven, and assessments are credible and evidence based.

Queensland's teacher registration authority—the Queensland College of Teachers, the QCT—is already responsible for registration and discipline of teachers and other related functions. It is to be given a new function of certifying teachers as highly accomplished or lead teachers. The purposes of certification were described as follows—

- to recognise and promote quality teaching;
- to provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice; and
- to provide a reliable indication of quality teaching that can be used to identify, recognise and/or reward HAT and LT certified teachers.

It is a known fact that teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate, and the opportunity for teachers to obtain a higher qualification yet stay in the classroom rather than move into a more administrative role requires the adoption of measures that will assist in retaining high performing teachers through enhanced qualifications with corresponding salaries.

In 2017 the Department of Education ran a pilot program in Far North Queensland and north coast regions which attracted 500 expressions of interest resulting in 184 applications for this new certification. Of those, 44 teachers received a HAT certification and three were successful as lead teachers. To be eligible for certification, teachers must be fully registered Australian citizens or persons who hold a visa that enables permanent residency and are assessed in two stages. The first stage, which costs \$850, is a preliminary assessment of the application. The second, which costs \$650, assesses their teaching practice. Renewal fees are \$100 and due every five years. In addition, assessors will be required to be trained for this process and to keep records.

Given that these fees are quite substantial, I asked the department what happens if a teacher is unsuccessful after stage 1. Do they lose their \$850 or the additional \$650 should they pass stage 1 but fail stage 2? The department answered that they do not get any refund as it is a sunk fund that goes towards processing costs incurred, but it was thought that if a teacher got through stage 1 they would in all probability get through stage 2. It is quite a complex procedure where applications are assessed against 30 elements of standards, which is why workshops are being held around the state to show teachers considering applying what is required.

There is still some degree of uncertainty as to whether the fees collected will meet the costs to the certifying authority, the Queensland College of Teachers. During the public hearing on 13 March it was stated by QCT that if there is a gap, it will be met by employers. The department confirmed that the 'government will cover any shortfall in costs not covered by application fees'. However, the cost to the college for the implementation and ongoing conduct of HAT and LT certification will vary over time as certification is voluntary and demand driven.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission expressed concerns about the full cost of certification services and how they would be met and also the fact the bill does not contain provision to enable the college to revoke certification of HAT and lead teachers should they bring themselves or the teaching profession into disrepute. The department noted this was beyond the scope of the current national framework. Perhaps the minister will be kind enough to address this in her reply.

A decision was handed down by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission in August and followed submissions made by the QTU and the Department of Education and aligns with an agreement negotiated with the government. It also sets remuneration for highly accomplished and lead teachers amongst the highest in the country. Commencing on 1 July 2018, salaries for HAT teachers are \$111,725 and lead teachers, \$121,795. Witnesses at the committee hearing acknowledged that the teacher retention rate is a concern, so it is to be hoped this initiative will stem the flow away from the profession.

I cannot let the opportunity pass to recognise the fantastic schools in the Currumbin electorate. They are all different and unique in their own way, some very small and others with over a thousand and even 2,000 students, but all have the same admirable dedication to provide quality learning in a safe and happy environment. Primary schools in the Currumbin electorate include St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, situated in Currumbin Waters. It is always a delight to visit. Then there is Coolangatta, almost on the New South Wales border, which just celebrated its centenary in fine style. Coming north there is Currumbin State School followed by Elanora with Tallebudgera out to the west. They are all fantastic centres of learning. Further still and deep into the lush valleys are Currumbin Valley and Ingleside schools in Tallebudgera Valley. I often marvel at how well these teachers at little schools prepare their charges for life in schools that are massive by comparison.

There are two high schools: Palm Beach-Currumbin and Elanora high. Both these high schools are proudly independent public schools. In fact, PBC was one of the first schools in Queensland to become an independent school under the initiative established under the LNP's term of government. The philosophy behind this is to encourage innovation and inclusiveness in decisions that are in the best interests of the school community. Both of these great schools applied for a school based police officer, which the LNP committed to but Labor refused. PBC sits just outside my electorate boundaries now, but about two-thirds of the students live in the Currumbin electorate. Both these high schools have flourished under the IPS initiative but, sadly, due to union pressure the Palaszczuk government intends to abolish them.

In her introductory speech, the Minister for Education stated—

The bill provides for a high-level framework without prescribing processes in detail. This ensures flexibility in the way certification is administered over time, to allow the college to be able to adapt to changes in national certification processes without needing significant legislative change.

If the minister thinks flexibility and being adaptable to changes without prescribing processes in detail is a good thing, why is she so determined to get rid of Queensland's thriving independent public school initiative? It is yet another example of how beholden the Labor government is to their union

masters. On the one hand we have a terrific project being introduced in this bill that allows teachers who excel and want to perform at a high level to do so and on the other we have a government wanting to tear down schools that are making some of their own decisions based on what is best for them.

The member for Maryborough raised the issue on page 8 of the departmental briefing, despite fishing for comments of a negative nature, stating—

We know there has been a problem with the transfer system in terms of IPS schools.

The assistant director-general of HR said that IPS schools will be the same as any other school in the state with the advent of HAT and lead teachers.

I enjoy a close relationship with all of my schools and value being able to communicate freely with each of them and have enormous respect for the role teachers and principals play. The LNP have a plan to provide better education results for Queensland kids because we want them to be the smartest. That means they need to be able to think clearly. Our plan would air-condition every state school classroom over two parliamentary terms.

To this day I have fond memories of my teachers in primary school and in secondary school. Teachers play a critical role in the development of our kids that extends way past school hours—

(Time expired)