



Speech by

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STATE MEMBER FOR KURWONGBAH

Hansard 4 August 1998

NAIDOC WEEK CELEBRATION, KURWONGBAH STATE SCHOOL

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (7.14 p.m.): From 5 July to 12 July this year the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee celebrations and activities were undertaken all around Australia. Many schools across Queensland celebrate NAIDOC Week and are playing a vital role towards building a better understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This evening I wish to pay tribute to the Kurwongbah State School for embracing the spirit of reconciliation and celebrating NAIDOC Week by having made Thursday, 9 July, such a cultural learning day. I commend the principal, Larry Burke, staff and students and parents for their desire to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of the indigenous culture, heritage, traditions and beliefs.

I am privileged to represent the electorate of Kurwongbah, which takes its name from the local Aboriginal language and is a composite word for "water" and "trees". I note also that the sports houses at the Kurwongbah State School are named after Aboriginal words for water—Koorunga, Mundi, Wyalla and Aroona. However, the unfortunate thing in Kurwongbah is that we have a very small Aboriginal population. Regrettably, many children and adults will go through their lives having little or no direct contact with such a rich and diverse culture. That makes a day such as this all the more special.

A lot of work went into the presentation for the day. Leading up to the day, we had the end of semester school holidays. During those holidays, many parents, students and local contemporary artist Gordon Bennett gave up their valuable time to paint the cement pillars in the covered games area for the students. This delighted the students upon returning to school after the school holidays.

They also had ATSI classroom displays and in various classrooms teachings about the significance of NAIDOC Day. To the delight of all, the Honourable Matt Foley, Attorney-General and Minister for The Arts, took time out of his very busy schedule to visit Kurwongbah and the students of the Kurwongbah State School—

Mr Foley: And the member for Kurwongbah.

Mrs LAVARCH: Yes. The Minister officially opened the Day of Learning on the Thursday. He kicked off the day and got into the spirit of it all by joining in with the Koormurri Dancers in their traditional dancing display. The principal, Larry Burke, and many of the students say that, as personified on the stage that morning, it was the finest emu they have ever seen.

However, on a serious note, I am glad that the Minister is in the House tonight. I take this opportunity to thank him on behalf of the principal, who has expressed to me how honoured and privileged he was to have the Minister there that morning. The students at Kurwongbah are still talking about it. They replay the video many times and have promised a private viewing for us.

After the official opening by the Honourable Matt Foley, the day got under way with didgeridoo playing, boomerang throwing, face painting and traditional art, story telling, the painting of a small mural and participation in a bush tucker lunch. The day concluded with a corroboree workshop with the teachers, parents, students and members of the dance group. I commend the principal, Larry Burke, staff, parents and students for putting on a great day and doing their part to work towards reconciliation.

The date 9 July marked the seventh year that the Kurwongbah State School has celebrated NAIDOC Week. NAIDOC has a 60-year history and tonight I wish to make special mention of the history of NAIDOC Week. Since 1940—nearly 60 years ago—the National Missionary Council of Australia had

been encouraging churches to observe the Sunday before the Australia Day weekend as Aboriginal Sunday. They had taken up the suggestion by a Mr William Cooper, following his successful promotion of a day of mourning on Australia Day 1938. It was in 1955 that the NMCA changed the date to the first Sunday in July and secured the support of the Federal and State Governments as a result——

Time expired.
