



Speech by

Tony ELLIOTT

MEMBER FOR CUNNINGHAM

Hansard 11 November 1998

AIRCONDITIONING OF GOONDIWINDI STATE SCHOOL

Mr ELLIOTT (Cunningham—NPA) (11.11 p.m.): The matter that I wish to bring to the attention of the House tonight is the deplorable conditions suffered by students during hot days at the Goondiwindi State School. This school is unlike many modern schools, which have their buildings insulated. We all know that insulation is now put into both the roof and the walls of some of our more modern buildings. The walls of the old buildings in Goondiwindi that these children are housed in during the day face the west and, on the hot days when that western sun beats onto that uninsulated western wall, the heat is quite intolerable. On a large number of days, the teachers actually have to take the children outside under the trees in the playground areas and try to teach them there. I believe that this, quite frankly, is unacceptable. It is certainly not good for the quality of teaching in that school, but even more important is the health risk to the children. That health risk has, in fact, been documented by the local doctors at Goondiwindi as a result of the urging of the community to try to get these buildings airconditioned.

The local people in the area have conducted a massive fundraising program during a tremendously difficult downturn period. Those people have had great difficulties in that the cotton crop in that area was not very successful. They have had droughts and floods—there were seven floods, I think, during the summer period in the Goondiwindi area. Those people could not have picked a worse time to try to go out and fundraise. We are not talking about refrigerated airconditioning; all we are talking about is evaporative air cooling. That is all that is needed. Out of an estimated cost of \$130,000, those people in the town of Goondiwindi have raised in excess of \$40,000. I think that speaks volumes.

I point out that the P & C had contact with the Premier's Department in the same way, I guess, as one might say that Moranbah did. It submitted a proposal under the Leading Schools program which was basically mapped out for it by the Premier's Department. I would like to congratulate the present Government on having the foresight to stick with the commitment that was given to Moranbah.

Ms Boyle: Fairness.

Mr ELLIOTT: Exactly. I think that it shows that there is some fairness in respect of things like that.

Mr Fenlon interjected.

Mr ELLIOTT: I have not got time to take the interjection of the member opposite. It is important to understand that there also was a commitment to the Goondiwindi people. They are going to be mortified if, in fact, the Government walks away from them. I realise that Moranbah has now been put into the Cooler Schools zone. However, the State school is the only public building in Goondiwindi that does not have airconditioning. People who are sent to jail in Goondiwindi have airconditioning, yet our children in Goondiwindi—

Mr Lucas: How many times have you had airconditioning in Goondiwindi?

Mr ELLIOTT: It is an unbelievably hot place. The honourable member ought to go down there.

Mr Lucas: I am saying at the jails.

Mr ELLIOTT: It is unbelievably hot. We are prepared to give airconditioning to the prisoners but we are not prepared to give it to our own children in the school. I think that speaks for itself.

In all honesty, believe me, honourable members have not heard the last of this. We need to have some equity in respect of these two situations. As I say, they are old buildings and they are totally unsuited to the heat; whereas Moranbah, for argument's sake, has relatively modern buildings with insulation in the walls and roof. I do not begrudge them that airconditioning at all. In fact, they did an

absolutely tremendous job of raising money up there. I believe that they raised 50% of the cost of airconditioning the school in Moranbah. I take my hat off to them, but it is very important that the Goondiwindi State School gets airconditioning also.

Time expired.
