



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

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MILPERA STATE HIGH SCHOOL

Mr NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (11.24 p.m.): Often it seems to me that not enough credit is given to those unsung teachers and educational administrators who give of their own time, week in and week out, for their students and their school community. This evening I wish to highlight one of those. I would like to give thanks to a school community that has worked with very special students at the Milpera State High School at Chelmer in Brisbane. As many members would know, the Premier has given me special responsibility for multicultural affairs across Queensland. The Milpera State High School exemplifies what is good about multiculturalism.

What is Milpera? Milpera is a State high school which provides English language and other services to prepare newly arrived migrant students for participation in high schools around the Brisbane area. The students at Milpera are speakers of languages other than English when they arrive in Australia. They bring with them a rich diversity of languages and cultures. While a number of the students at Milpera are here on a temporary or student visa, others will, in the long term, contribute much to the prosperity of this State.

Students stay at Milpera for approximately six months before they move to high schools with English as a second language units. These high schools include the Yeronga State High School, the Mount Gravatt State High School, the Sunnybank State High School and the Oxley State High School. For ESL students entering the State system in Years 8 to 12, there is ongoing demand for support programs. Not only do these students need to learn another language, that is, English, but they need to complete Senior schooling in this language. It appears to me that they do not have the time, that is, five to seven years, to possibly reach academic competency at a comparable level, nor the quite high proficiency in the academic language development that is required. I see it as imperative that the Commonwealth recognises the dilemma faced by Queensland, and the Milpera school in particular, to meet the unmet and unfunded needs of ESL students.

The Honourable Phil Ruddock, MP, Federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, indicated to me in April of this year that his Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs is responsible for administration, eligibility and funding for the Adult Migrant English Program and that the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs has responsibility for the administration, eligibility and funding of ESL programs. The Federal Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs has also indicated to me that DETYA, with input from Education Queensland, is currently reviewing the provision of support for newly arrived students, including those at Milpera. I hope that Education Queensland drives a very hard bargain with the Commonwealth.

I share the concerns of those members of the Milpera school who have family and friends in and around Kosovo. I think that we all feel for people in Kosovo, East Timor and other trouble spots where innocent people face increasing danger in areas of war and conflict. I hope that local agencies are in touch with places like Milpera and lend support where needed.

Milpera does very well where it advocates for and acts in the best interests of its students and their families; provides the best services it can through appropriate and relevant curriculum offerings and settlement services; and accepts personal accountability within its whole school approach. What I like about Milpera is that it seeks to maximise the potential of every student within a socially just and culturally inclusive environment. Moreover, Milpera seeks to continually monitor, through regular assessment, and to progress students at their own pace. Milpera exits about 300 students per year to

high schools, to high schools with ESL units and to TAFE English language centres. After these exit destinations, former Milpera students can move on to Adult Migrant English Programs, Advanced Migrant English Programs, Job Preparation & Support, TAFE Initiative Courses and English as a Second Language. Students at Milpera come from the former Yugoslavia, Taiwan, China, Vietnam, the Middle East, Western Samoa, Indonesia and many other countries.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is only a small portion of my speech left, and I seek to have the remainder of it incorporated in Hansard.

Leave granted.

Milpera is a school with a fluctuating enrolment of between 120 and 170 students at any one time. The enrolment patterns have remained fairly constant over the past few years with respect to numbers and categories of migration although the multicultural composition of the intakes varies with global situations of a political and/or economic nature.

There is an emerging trend towards more students not funded under the Commonwealth ESL guidelines. In 1998 the numbers of funded New Arrival students is up on previous years for the same funding period.

The visa categories of migration as at 20 March 1998 (for Milpera) are:

Family Reunion 33%

Refugee/Special Humanitarian and Women at Risk 27%

Permanent Business 22%

Temporary 16%

Other 2%

Key learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education and the environment are taught at Milpera. The teaching staff is mostly from a secondary specialist teaching background with additional qualifications in teaching English as a Second Language but there are 2 primary trained teachers.

Milpera is unique in its role as a provider of quality settlement services, which enhance the effectiveness of its educational services.

While Milpera employs a number of bilingual staff who support students bilingually in the class room and provide for school

interpreting and translating (e.g. reports, permission letters and all manner of school communications), it's the Commonwealth that has the primary responsibility for the provision of translating and interpreting services as provided by the Federal Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIMA) to support the schools, on site face to face and group interpreting. This enables Milpera to keep parents/families and the wider multicultural community informed.

One of the great strengths of Milpera has to be Ms Adele Rice. As Principal, Ms Rice unashamedly champions her students. I see Milpera as what the Multicultural Queensland Policy is all about. The policy is about our culturally diverse society here in Queensland. Multiculturalism is about the continuing development of one cohesive, harmonious society from this diversity.

Can I say to all in this House that I hold up Milpera as a special place of welcome for ESL students and a place that we can all learn about humility, love and compassion.

In conclusion, I hope that Milpera receives the support of all of us in the community, now and in the future.
