



Speech by

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PETRIE STATE SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs LAVARCH (Kurwongbah—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): On Sunday, 24 October, I had the pleasure of attending the Petrie State School to join in the celebrations for the school's 125th anniversary. Tonight I want to inform the House of the remarkable history of this school and place on the public record my congratulations to all involved in making the celebrations a great success.

I was delighted—as I am sure were all the people who are connected with the school—that the Honourable Dean Wells, Minister for Education, was able to attend to officially open the proceedings and mark the occasion not only by honouring the past but also by sharing his vision for the future. The Honourable Minister made special mention of the presentation by the school captains Ryan Binks and Siobhan O'Connor and vice captains William Adib and Kristy Penfold. I, too, want to take the opportunity to congratulate these fine young Australians for their excellent contribution to the day's proceedings.

The Petrie State School motto is "Knowledge is power" and from the slates of 1874 to the computers of 1999 it is a school that has never lost sight of empowering all of its students, past and present, with quality education.

To mark the 125 years of education, the school produced a comprehensive publication recording the history of the school. This was done with the assistance of many volunteers including Beth Small, Brian Andrews and Darryl Adams. Tracing the history of a school such as Petrie, which began its life as the North Pine One and North Pine Two Provisional Schools, brings into sharp focus how very different things are today in setting up a new school.

The school had its beginnings back in 1873 when a public meeting was called for the purpose of obtaining school facilities for the North Pine area. The Board of Education, which had been set up by the Queensland Colonial Government in 1869, introduced a system whereby provisional schools could be set up. However, this required a local committee making an application for a school and that committee being responsible for the provision of all local requirements, together with necessary contributions to be made by the department.

As is recorded, the Board of Education granted free the minimum books required for the school and paid the salary of an approved teacher. As departmental aid was only given on the condition that it could be withdrawn at any time, it meant that the success of the school venture was dependent upon continued local interest and support.

Because the North Pine River had no bridge and only a ford, there were problems in deciding where to locate the school. The crossing of the river was seen to be a great hazard for the children. The solution to this problem, as seen by the early committee and submitted to the department, was quite novel. To solve the problem, instead of having the children cross the river to go to school, it was decided that the school had to cross the river. This meant that there had to be two schools operating on a half-time system.

The first section of the school was set up on the south side of the river and was opened as the North Pine River Crossing Provisional School No. 183 with 16 enrolments. To complete the school and have the north side of the North Pine River residents catered for, the local committee had to raise funds to have the other half of the school opened for the commencement of the 1875 school year—and this they did. This school was known as North Pine No. 2 Provisional School No. 183. The second half of the school had 20 enrolments.

As the school had only one teacher, the school hours on the south side of the river were from half past 8 to half past 12 and the afternoon lessons were held on the north side of the river. Local history records that when flooding prevented the teacher from crossing the river, the licensee of the North Pine Hotel took over as schoolmaster.

Two years later, a bridge was constructed across the North Pine River and again the local committee had to raise funds to build a new school combining both provisional schools into one campus. The new school was known as the North Pine State School and commenced in the 1879 school year. Today the school still comprises one of the buildings that were constructed in 1888. The school changed its name from the North Pine State School to Petrie State School in 1956.

The school is very fortunate to have Mr Norton Sands as president of its P & C for he has been relentless in his push to have new facilities and maintenance work undertaken at the school. Last year I was able to lend my voice to getting a new roof for the old school block—the one that was built in 1888.

Sunday was a special day for Petrie State School and was made all the more special with the cutting of a cake by one of the older surviving students, Mrs Maggie Barbour, who is 98 years of age, and the youngest student, Connor Lennon, who is five years of age. I join with all others who have congratulated the school on reaching this milestone under the guidance of principal David Stephenson. I know that the school will have a great future.
