



Speech by

PAUL LUCAS, MLA

MEMBER FOR LYTTON

Hansard 14 April 1999

SCHOOL CHAPLAINCY

Mr LUCAS (Lytton—ALP) (10.11 a.m.): Today I rise to inform the Parliament of the fantastic work done in our local bayside community by the chaplains at Wynnum and Wynnum North high schools. It is not always easy being young. Once upon a time school was much more leisurely and employment was assured when students left. The slower pace of life and greater job security in the community allowed families greater stability. In our times of job and social uncertainty, much stress is placed upon school students and their families. This is where the work of school chaplaincy is vital.

We have two fantastic chaplains in our local community: Brad Kaefer at Wynnum State High School and Steven Forward at Wynnum North State High School. They each work four and a half days a week in their chosen vocation and receive a very modest stipend for their incredibly important work. Both are supported through the Scripture Union of Queensland, a non-denominational group of Christian churches whose aim is to promote Christianity in our schools.

That is not to say that their important work as Christians is all that they do. The role of a chaplain is to assist and support any students, regardless of creed, colour or personal background. This they do with great commitment and diligence. Whether it be visiting sick students and teachers or their families or attending funerals or just helping with advice and support, chaplains Brad and Steve are always there.

Each year there is a tradition at Wynnum High that the graduating senior class make a donation to the school in thanks for the school's time and support over the years. In the past this has been used for things such as equipment and seating. I was flabbergasted, in our secular society, when in 1997 the Wynnum State High School Senior Student Council gesture was to subsidise an increase in funds to allow chaplain Brad to be there even more days than he then was. That shows how much he really was appreciated by those who matter—the students.

It is horses for courses. Chaplains Brad and Steve are young and dynamic and exactly the sort of people whom our youth relate to. We should be doing more to support school chaplaincy, particularly in the light of our tragic youth suicide rate. Early intervention, whether it be to reduce causes of crime, to support students and their families or just to provide a friendly ear to listen, has been shown to be vital and represents money far better spent than the great many more dollars spent later on picking up the pieces. I say to our local chaplains at Wynnum: well done.
