



Speech by

Mr D. BRISKEY

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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EDUCATION QUEENSLAND

Mr BRISKEY (Cleveland—ALP) (11.22 p.m.): There are some wonderful things happening in education in Queensland. Since my appointment to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Dean Wells—

Mr Mackenroth: Is that one of the wonderful things?

Mr BRISKEY: The member asks if that is one of the wonderful things to have happened. I thank the member for his support.

Since my appointment to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Dean Wells, in February this year, I have had the opportunity to see many of those wonderful things during visits to almost 50 Queensland schools. From Cairns to the Gold Coast, from Mackay to Winton, a band of dedicated teaching professionals are building a future for our children of which we can all feel confident and proud. However, education in Queensland is assuredly not one size fits all. The truth is that challenges in our schools today mirror those challenges facing us as a society. Queensland children do not leave their home lives at the school gate.

I inform members of the House of one Queensland school community whose efforts are truly inspirational. I had the opportunity of visiting Cairns West State School just last week. Well over 50% of its students are either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. One in three students, or 106 children, speak an indigenous language at home. A further 48 of the school's children speak a language other than English at home. The parents of many of these children received little or no formal schooling, resulting in a natural fear of school and what it has to offer their children. Attendance for some students is poor.

As members can understand, the challenges are many. Yet the vast enthusiasm and sheer gusto with which this impressive band of women—the principal, her deputy, the president of the P & C and president of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parent group—work is just amazing. Kath Johnstone, the principal of the school, is the sort of leader who inspires those under her.

I had the opportunity this week to speak to a group of young children from all the primary schools within the Redlands Shire about leadership. I used the example of principal Kath Johnstone. She is able to inspire her staff to do their best. She does not cajole them into doing the job. She leads them by allowing this band of people to excel in what they do. They believe that she is a marvellous leader. She believes that she sits in her office and lets the school run itself. The reality is that she is providing a brilliant example for her teaching staff and the parent and school community. I congratulate her on that. Cairns West State School rises to all the challenges I have mentioned with programs to involve the parents in the school, a school bus to make home visits to poor attendees, an alternative campus for self-excluders designed to reintegrate students back into school life and the employment of a family support worker.

Another school I had the opportunity to visit recently is the Loganlea State High School. This school has a higher than usual interest in manual arts—in fact almost double other schools. That led to my announcement two weeks ago on behalf of the Minister of additional manual arts

facilities. This school also has a horticultural program and strong links with local industry. Vocational education is the overwhelming focus of the majority of students at the school.

At Smithfield State High School the interest is in information technology and a community radio station managed and staffed by the students. The member for Barron River and I had the pleasure of announcing painting works at Smithfield and a library extension for the Edge Hill State School during an interview with the students, who do a magnificent job running their radio station from the school.

The important task for educators and the Government is to rise to all the challenges presented by the needs of students and provide educational programs that fit their needs and the needs of the communities from which they come. Of course, it will always remain important to ensure that certain standards are common across all education sectors, but it is also vitally important to equip Queensland children with the skills they need to live, work and prosper in the 21st century.
