



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Hansard 1 June 2000

**JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY HIGH TECHNOLOGY LIBRARY**

**Dr CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (7.22 p.m.): 12 May 2000 will be remembered as an important milestone in the history of the Cairns campus of James Cook University for two very different reasons. 12 May was the day that the Prime Minister, John Howard, opened the \$12.5m state-of-the-art, high technology library building which featured in this week's IT section of the Australian newspaper.

I particularly commend the commitment of Judith Clark, Manager of Information Services, who has worked tirelessly to establish this magnificent new library. Ms Clark began as the university librarian when the campus collection consisted of some 2,000 volumes on a few shelves within the Cairns TAFE library. Today, more than a decade on, the library has in excess of 40,000 volumes and is truly a library for the 21st century, with a 24-hour computer laboratory, three electronic tutorial rooms and multimedia creativity labs, two videoconference and lecture rooms, an Internet cafe, a disabilities support unit, lecture theatre, and a study skills centre.

However, had it not been for the Beattie Labor Government, it could well have been May 2001 before the library was opened. It was only because the State Government provided a \$7.5m interest-free loan and a \$2m grant that students and staff have been able to utilise the library since January of this year. 12 May will also be remembered as the day on which some 200 striking academic staff and students rallied to make the Prime Minister aware of the serious implications of Federal Government higher education policies for regional universities such as James Cook, a theme taken up very strongly by both the chancellor and vice-Chancellor of the university at the library opening.

I want to place on the record my strong support for both academic staff and students of the Cairns campus of James Cook University. As I indicated when I addressed the rally, their case against the Federal Government is compelling, and I wish I had more time tonight to provide details. I have written to the vice-chancellor congratulating him on his strong stand but also urging him to negotiate further with academic staff to provide a just outcome to their current 4% salary claim.

But ultimately neither students nor staff will achieve justice and equity until the Federal Government reverses its higher education policies and acts to support regional universities such as James Cook with increased funding. If 12 May represented the day on which the Prime Minister finally woke up to the fact that he is destroying Australian universities, it would indeed be an historic date, but sadly, I doubt it.

Time expired.

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