



Speech by

**Dr LESLEY CLARK**

**MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER**

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Hansard 18 October 2000

### **REDLYNCH STATE SCHOOL**

**Dr CLARK** (Barron River—ALP) (10.59 p.m.): This morning I lodged a petition from 311 parents who are seeking support for the construction of additional facilities at the Redlynch State School, in particular a second preschool unit. This school is located in the heart of the rapidly growing Freshwater Valley community which will become part of the Barron River electorate after the next election following changes to electoral boundaries. The provision of adequate facilities at the Redlynch State School to cope with rapid growth is the most significant State issue in this community and my highest priority.

To illustrate the problem, I will quote from the petition prepared by the Redlynch P & C Association. It states—

"The Petition of citizens of Queensland would like to draw to the attention of the House the over crowding problems the Redlynch State School is having with its Pre-school, Library and Administration Block. We are a growing school that has gone from 250 students to over 600 in five years. To date these facilities have not kept up with the growth of the rest of the school. We have prioritised the need for these facilities to be upgraded and decided the Pre-school with its waiting list of over 120 students for the year 2001 is the most important. Currently our Pre-school only takes 50 students. We are very concerned that students will miss out on pre-school all together because of the lack of places available."

Whilst the priorities of the parents are clear, it should not be thought that the Government has ignored the needs of this growing school. Just last month I attended the official opening of another new teaching block, comprising four classrooms, which follows the construction of six classrooms in blocks E and F just last year. Funding has also been approved for an additional undercover area and toilets for senior students, which should be completed this year or early next year.

The growth of the Freshwater Valley community as evidenced by the increased enrolments at Redlynch State School has resulted in the need to plan for secondary schooling on land that has been set aside for a high school adjacent to the primary school. Community consultation has begun with respect to the preferred model, and it appears at this early stage that there is support for an integrated campus, with a middle school at Redlynch and Years 11 and 12 to be completed at one of the existing high schools.

Whilst there is a recognised need for additional administration and library space in the primary school, the location and size of these facilities should reflect the final outcomes of the master planning process that is under way. However, it is critical that the planning phase be completed in time for provision to be made in the 2001-02 Budget if additional facilities are to be ready in time for the 2002 academic year. I am pleased to learn that Education Queensland will appoint a senior person to coordinate the preparation of the master plan.

Whilst broad consultation is very necessary in planning for secondary education facilities and curriculum, the voice of the community is clear with respect to the need for another preschool unit. The present waiting list of 128 children means that, even if a second unit is built to accommodate a total of 100 children, there will still be parents who will need to make alternative arrangements if they wish their children to benefit from preschool education. Local alternatives do exist in the Catholic system, and a State preschool is located some distance away. However, these options are not acceptable to parents who live at Redlynch and who want their children to attend that State primary school. As Redlynch

parent Sue Fincham, who has already had to utilise other preschool facilities, said in a recent Cairns Post article—

"This huge upheaval of having to start from scratch, settling in and making new friends is not fair to small children."

Clearly parents understand, as do teachers, that it is far preferable for children to move from preschool to Year 1 within the same school, with the least possible disruption to their education. Apparently, the reason that it was not possible to build a second preschool unit for the beginning of next year is that there are even longer waiting lists elsewhere and budget funds were directed to those areas. However, I have sought the support of Minister Dean Wells to provide funds in next year's budget so that the second preschool unit can be built and opened in January 2002.

Unfortunately, the only hope for parents on the waiting list for 2001 is if the school is prepared to convert the music room to a temporary preschool classroom, but even then staffing cannot be guaranteed at this stage. The waiting list at Redlynch and elsewhere demonstrates very clearly that it is time that preschool became part of compulsory education, as is the case in other States and as was recommended in the Education Queensland strategic planning document 2010: The Next Decade released earlier this year.

In conclusion, I commend the P & C President, Danielle Bowthorpe, for her commitment to and leadership of the current campaign on the part of the Redlynch parents. May I reassure the entire school community that I will continue to advocate on their behalf until we achieve our goal of providing a quality education in the best possible facilities for all the Redlynch children who need it.

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