



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BURLEIGH

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SPECIAL EDUCATION UNIT, MIAMI HIGH SCHOOL

Mrs SMITH (Burleigh—ALP) (7.21 p.m.): Last week I was proud to officially open stage 1 of the newly refurbished special education unit at Miami High School. These are improvements which were long overdue, and I would like to thank the Minister for Education for her efforts on behalf of the unit. Before the upgrade, all of the unit's 47 students attended lessons together in one large classroom. The students have a variety of vision, hearing and/or speech and language impairment, and their existing accommodation was not conducive to maximising concentration or learning. There was also a serious lack of special facilities. Special kids need special facilities. Now there is a range of facilities, including a maths and science room, language room, office, sick bay, therapy room and a responsible thinking room. Perhaps we should have one of those!

The complex was completed at cost of \$236,000 and has been brilliantly planned and built. The new unit comprises a number of facilities especially designed for the hearing and visually impaired. These students now have access to vision impaired adaptive technology, and the rooms are sound proofed which means that loud Braille machines can be used without disturbing other students.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the staff of the special education unit on their dedication and hard work. Caroline Eggins has been with the unit since its inception 16 years ago and is a gifted teacher and an excellent administrator.

Also included in the unit is the commercial kitchen furnished with \$5,000 of white goods generously donated by Harvey Norman. This will enable students in the unit to get a head start on traineeships and to learn valuable vocational and life skills. Helen Scown, whose daughter Cassie is a student in the special education unit, has been a tireless advocate for the improvements. Her efforts have been acknowledged by having the kitchen named in her honour. I can testify personally that Helen's G block turns out a great morning tea.

The most wonderful thing about the improvements is the utter delight of the students who are thrilled to bits with their new classroom and facilities. I was proudly escorted to every part of the new unit and shown every nook and cranny. The students now have an obvious pride in the school and that can only increase their achievements.

Although the improvements to the unit are terrific, there is more work yet to be done. Stage 2 of the project will provide a storeroom for outdoor education equipment, a staff room and allow the horticulture sheds to be moved providing a garden for the students. While the funding has not yet been allocated for this stage, I know that the Minister for Education, Anna Bligh, as a former student of Miami High has it high on her list of priorities. I cannot wait to see it finished.