



Speech by
Lesley Clark

MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

Hansard Wednesday, 10 November 2004

CAIRNS EDUCATION RENEWAL PROJECT

Dr LESLEY CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.31 p.m.): I welcome the announcement by Minister Anna Bligh today of a six-point plan for the future of public education in Cairns. This plan is the culmination of the Cairns education renewal project and commits the government to investment of more than \$15 million in new and revamped state school facilities. In Barron River these initiatives will lead to the development of a middle school at Redlynch on land opposite the state school to open in 2007 and the establishment of a P-12 school at Kuranda by amalgamating the Kuranda District Primary School and high school beginning with the relocation of year 7 students to the senior campus in 2006. This plan will also strengthen senior pathway opportunities between Smithfield State High School and James Cook University. While the government has no plans at this stage to proceed with a year 10 to 12 senior campus of Smithfield State High School on JCU land, my personal support for this proposal is as strong as ever, and I hope to see this come to fruition in the future.

These are all exciting educational initiatives that will help prepare future generations of young people and respond to demographic changes, growth projections and new curriculum directions. They also reflect the outcome of an extensive community consultation process which was described in a report to the minister last month.

Whilst these initiatives have been endorsed by community reference groups comprising principals and parents from 26 schools, the Queensland Teachers Union, the Queensland Council of P&C Associations and Advance Cairns, some parents have objected to the sale of Education Queensland land to help fund these initiatives, in particular Cairns North State School. In my electorate these concerns have focused on the sale of land in Poolwood Road, Kewarra Beach, which was purchased in 1990 as a potential future school site. Parents and residents have petitioned the government because they believe that a school should be built on this site and were not satisfied with the Cairns education renewal community consultation process.

Detailed analysis of current and projected population growth and development approvals was undertaken by consultants as part of the educational renewal project. They advised that the pattern of growth on the northern beaches since 1990 means that this land is now not the most appropriate site for a new school. In fact, it was never an ideal location. They further advised that Trinity Beach State School can cope with student enrolments from areas to the north at Kewarra Beach, Clifton Beach and Palm Cove and that a new primary school is better located when needed in the future on the site of the Smithfield State High School which is south of Trinity Beach and adjacent to the area where the greatest residential growth is occurring. The other two schools that serve the northern beaches, Yorkey's Knob and Caravonica, are currently underenrolled with plenty of spare capacity for future growth.

Importantly, analysis of enrolments indicates that in the northern beaches only 54 per cent of students attend state primary schools because parents living there take advantage of the choice offered by Trinity Anglican School and Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, both located on the northern beaches.

The report to the minister on the outcome of the community consultation process conveyed the views of both the Kewarra Beach residents and the wider community. I reject absolutely the allegation that

the consultation process was inadequate, and I table a number of documents to demonstrate that this criticism is unfounded.

The minister has weighed up all the arguments and views that emerged through the consultation process and those expressed in the petitions presented to the government. I am satisfied that the minister's six-point plan outlined today is the most appropriate way of providing for future growth in student enrolments and will result in significant education benefits for students and further enhance the excellent standard of state education in Cairns and in my electorate of Barron River.