



Speech by

Liz Cunningham

MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL (ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E)

Mrs LIZ CUNNINGHAM (Gladstone—Ind) (3.28 pm): I rise to speak to the report of Estimates Committee E. As a previous speaker stated, the best gift we can give our children, besides the love of a sound and responsible family, is a good education. It is a great empowerment for young men and young women for their future. It gives them the best options and choices for their future development and growth.

We have wonderful schools, both public and private schools, in my electorate, overwhelmingly with teachers and staff who care very much for the students who attend. Gladstone State High School is a very old school. It is one of the oldest high schools in the region. It is in need of a significant amount of expenditure to update its teaching spaces to provide a better learning environment for the students.

The P&C at the Kin Kora State School raised a number of issues of concern with me. On 22 June I wrote to the Minister for Education about its concerns but to date have not received any reply, and its concerns relate to the proposal to relocate two buildings from Kin Kora State School to Rosella Park. Rosella Park School is our special education area for students with learning and living disabilities. I have to put on the record my wholehearted support for Rosella Park. It has not only dedicated teachers but also dedicated volunteers who work tirelessly with the students to give them the best options available. However, the P&C at the Kin Kora school believes that the decision to move two old demountable buildings to Rosella Park is not the best option, and it has expressed concerns in a number of areas. Firstly in terms of economic grounds, it believes that the relocation of the two demountables will not be a cost-effective option. It believes that it would be a better option and, in the long run, a cheaper option to have a new double modular building placed at the school. It has expressed concern in relation to the current service model for schools and it states—

Advice we received from facilities and service staff indicates that a school of our size with 780 students receives an allocation of three extra classroom spaces. We believe this to be an informal model rather than an established model and it does not recognise the complexity of large schools and the classroom spaces required to service the needs of a large number of students.

The other area of concern is aesthetics. The staff and P&C of Kin Kora school have established a wonderful physical school environment which all goes towards the development of public confidence in our school. The removal of the proposed building will leave a considerable and physical hole in the school grounds which detracts from the aesthetics of the school. The teaching spaces that are proposed to be relocated to Rosella Park are heavily utilised by the Kin Kora school P&C and other staff, relief teachers and special needs teachers. Rosella Park school, as I said, is the special needs school for the area. It used to be Gladstone Special School. I think Rosella Park is a much more desirable name for the school. It certainly does need extra teaching spaces, but the request that is being made and being asked for in the budget—and it is difficult to read in the budget documents because many of the expenses are done in bulk and they are not broken down in detail—is that Rosella Park receive new teaching spaces for those students who have special needs so that they can be purpose-built and adapted for the high needs that many of these students have.

We have a school at Tannum Sands which is our newest high school, and it certainly addresses the needs of an expanding region. I had the pleasure of seeing the Minister for Education in the electorate only a couple of weeks ago to open new facilities and a new teaching program. It was wonderful to see him. I know that many people in the electorate were pleased to see the minister there. Some students took him through the museum and art gallery, as did Pam, and he is certainly welcome to visit at any time, particularly because of, as I said, the quality education that is offered to residents and students in the electorate of Gladstone.