



Speech by

# Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Wednesday, 7 February 2007

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## EDUCATION, NICKLIN ELECTORATE

**Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (9.15 pm): With a new school year underway, it is timely to look at a range of education matters which seem to crop up every year. Firstly, I congratulate the Minister for Education on introducing prep classes to our schools in 2007. It will be interesting to get some feedback from parents and school communities in the months to come to see how this new class is received. This government needs to ensure that sufficient teachers, support teachers and resources are provided to our schools to cater for this demanding prep class level. One thing that has already come to light with the launch of prep classes in my electorate is insufficient classroom space. In one case, one of my schools is struggling to find sufficient space to cater for after school hours care.

Although it is a great concept, another school has struggled for two years to achieve after school hours care due to the long list of demands that were placed before them as they went through the process. Surely Education Queensland can provide our volunteer parents and citizens organisations with a hassle-free plan to set up after school hours care in a simple and quick manner. Some of the red tape attached to moving or expanding already established after hour school care programs has proven too restrictive and beyond the means of my local schools.

One of the concerns I have in my electorate that comes up regularly at this time of year is the loss of staffing and resources to our very small schools. One small school in the Nicklin electorate produces great results for its students, but it is continually struggling to keep its few teachers in place. Although the student population has fluctuated between 80 and 100 at times during the past eight years, a low enrolment at the beginning of this year has seen the principal returned to the classroom and valued part-time staff lost.

Queensland Education is continually boasting about what wonderful education opportunities it is offering to our young people, yet for the sake of a handful of students, the very small schools of Queensland are in a constant battle to retain valuable resources. Although I realise that a system must be in place to calculate staff numbers, surely in our small schools a cut-off level of resources should be set in place to ensure a secure and well-rounded education for our young people, and security for staff. Our primary level students are losing much-needed teachers and resources and their education and future opportunities are being eroded.

I have spoken before about the need for Education Queensland to ensure that administration and other non-teaching staff are provided sufficient working hours to manage small schools. Again, for our small schools to function efficiently, they need office staff and other support staff in place to manage the school. In the case of very small schools, if the principal is in the classroom all day it is vital that there are administration staff manning the office.

Parking around schools on the Sunshine Coast continues to be an issue which the department needs to address at both existing and new schools.