



Speech by

Robert Messenger

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

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GIVELDA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr MESSENGER (Burnett—NPA) (10.07 pm): This government has told my community of Pine Creek and Givelda that their state primary school, Givelda Primary School, a one-teacher, 14-student facility which is approximately an hour's bus trip from Bundaberg, is under threat of closure. The education department is now involved in a standard consultation process with the community before the potential mothballing of this state school.

After consulting with my constituents unfortunately I have to draw the conclusion that Givelda is typical of the manner in which this government, through its education and transport departments, is mismanaging small rural schools and their subsidised bus services. This government is looking for every opportunity it can to close down small rural schools because it has a big-is-best policy. The forced local government amalgamations is also another classic example of the big-is-best policy.

To the casual observer this consultation process and the reasons given for wanting to close Givelda may, on the surface, be fair and logical. However, on a closer examination of the facts, the manner and reasons for this closure must surely ring alarm bells. Fact No. 1 is that student numbers have not been declining within the Givelda and Pine Creek communities. The number of primary school age students in the community has increased. But because the government has failed to provide a subsidised or free bus service that travels to the Givelda State School student numbers have naturally declined. In 1989 the school was staffed by two teachers and had 50 students.

According to Kay Amsler, the secretary of the Givelda State School, 50 primary school students who live within a seven to eight kilometre radius are being bussed on subsidised bus services by this government to Bundaberg primary schools about 25 to 30 kilometres away. Why does this government prefer to encourage or entice its primary students with a free or subsidised school bus service to travel away from the nearest state school? It appears that the government is using the transport department to strangle the school of students. Why will this government not at least offer a free service to the nearest state school? After meeting with more than 20 parents and concerned citizens last Sunday afternoon, I have found that this problem is not only confined to the Givelda State School. It is occurring at Cordalba State School and at others in the Burnett. I also suspect that it is not an uncommon occurrence which is happening statewide.

I call on the education minister to give a commitment to personally visit any school he intends closing to speak with its parents and citizens. I also call on him to scrap plans he has for closing Givelda school. It is a wonderful school whose children are receiving a first-class state education. I also urge the transport minister to take immediate action to implement a review of all school bus runs.