



Speech by

Shane Knuth

MEMBER FOR CHARTERS TOWERS

Hansard Wednesday, 12 November 2008

UPPER BARRON STATE SCHOOL; REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—LNP) (10.08 pm): 'Learning is living' is the motto of the Upper Barron State School. Just recently it was announced that this small rural school would be forced by the state government to close its doors for the last time at the end of this school year, ending a 98-year chapter in the history of the tablelands. This school serves a farming community—families where every member of the family contributes to the running of the farm and supports the local school. The education received by many of the students begins early and ends late. It incorporates a six-hour compulsory school component in the middle. It is outrageous that in this day and age, with the massive advancements in technology, we are not embracing small schools as real educational alternatives to larger, more impersonal schools where individual students can fall through the cracks.

This decision will affect not only the current student population and their families but also the families of future students who were looking forward to the smaller classes and the personal attention their children would receive because of the size of the school. They were looking forward to being part of a school community where community involvement is highly regarded and gratefully appreciated. This decision will not only result in the closure of the school but also tear the heart out of a community because it is the school that is the centre of a community not only in terms of education but also for the part it plays in the social interaction of the community. This decision will mean children are leaving home earlier and coming home later, putting more pressure on the crumbling road system and more stress on the lives of these hardworking families.

All Queensland schools play a vital role in the education of our children. The LNP does not believe bigger is necessarily better. We believe that the uniqueness offered by small rural schools is worth protecting. We believe that parents should be given choices about their children's education, and we believe that small schools offer a viable educational alternative. That is why we are committed to giving our smaller schools the resources and support they need to continue. I call on the minister to rescind his decision to close this school.

Yesterday was Armistice Day—a day to commemorate the end of hostilities on the western front, a day to reflect on the extraordinary sacrifices of life that our nation has suffered throughout history. As I did in my first speech, I would like to honour those who fought and fell to preserve our flag and our Constitution. I acknowledge that by their sacrifice we have inherited the freedom and prosperity that we have today. I along with many other Australians believe that these brave men and women are the true heroes of our nation.