



Speech by
Curtis Pitt

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

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INNISFAIL STATE COLLEGE

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (12.05 pm): More than 740 students currently attend Innisfail State High School. The school has had a proud history ever since it opened in 1955, but like many other parts of town it suffered severe damage at the hands of Cyclone Larry in 2006 and required extensive repairs and rebuilding. A number of demountable classrooms were put in place as an interim measure. But from dark times can sometimes come great opportunity. It was recognised that a more effective and efficient delivery of education services could be provided to the Innisfail community through integration of Innisfail State High School, the Innisfail campus of Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE, and the Innisfail Inclusive Education Centre—all of which were being underutilised.

Community consultation commenced in August 2007, and there was overwhelming community support for the relocation to the TAFE site for the start of the 2010 year. On 25 May 2008, the then education minister, Rod Welford, announced that the state government had approved \$36.7 million for the redevelopment of the expanded Innisfail TAFE site into a new integrated community education facility under the \$850 million State Schools of Tomorrow initiative—the largest one-off state government investment in education in Queensland's history.

The aim of the State Schools of Tomorrow initiative is to provide high-quality educational facilities and technology which will better support modern teaching practices and provide improved opportunities for students. Innisfail was one of four projects approved for implementation as part of round 1 of the initiative, along with schools at East Ipswich, Inala and Wynnum. The community has never played a bigger role in planning for the future of state education in the area. It was even invited to assist in naming the new facility, which ultimately became known as Innisfail State College when it was announced by Minister Geoff Wilson earlier this year. Innisfail State College will provide an exciting new educational precinct and provide the community with a purpose-built 21st century teaching and learning environment. It involves transforming existing TAFE buildings, expanding the campus building zone by 1.15 hectares to 26.5 hectares, and building new centres for sport and performing arts which have capacity for 300 seats.

The redevelopment will include larger, flexible classrooms and science and computer laboratories, and a new Inclusive Education Centre, which will provide support for students with special needs. The high school and the TAFE will be fully integrated, which means high school students will be able to access school based apprenticeships, traineeships and higher level subjects. Linking the new and existing campus will be a large open, landscaped plaza where staff and students can relax between classes.

Last month I toured the construction site with Premier Anna Bligh. To say that I was impressed with progress would be an understatement. We met with representatives from project managers Evans Harch Pty Ltd who allowed us to have a thorough look through the new campus. I met with workers who were clearly thrilled to be working on such an exciting local project. Some of the children at the nearby child-care centre, which will continue to form part of the precinct, were even able to watch their dads at work on the construction site.

Construction is moving at a rapid pace, with a number of new buildings having already been handed over, including the new administration building, horticulture building and maintenance workshop.

Refurbishment of some existing classrooms and staff areas is complete, and refurbishment of the former TAFE administration building is about to commence, with staff moving into the new administration block.

In Far North Queensland, we know that we live in a part of the world where natural disasters can have an enormous impact, as evidenced by Cyclone Larry. The government has made a commitment that, as it builds new facilities across the Far North, we will take the opportunity to ensure cyclone facilities are included. In the case of Innisfail State College, the purpose-built cyclone shelter capable of standing up to category 5 conditions will double as a performing arts centre. The concrete tilt panel walls have now gone up on the performing arts centre, which will also provide a covered outdoor performance court as well as internal music and performance facilities. Of course, we hope that the community will never need to use the centre in the event of a cyclone but, in case we do, it will be here for many years to come.

No project is immune from problems—real or perceived—and Innisfail State College is no exception. There have been claims that the Geraldton Bridge, which connects Fitzgerald Esplanade with Flying Fish Point Road across the Johnstone River, may not be able to carry the increased level of traffic that will come from the establishment of the school. However, all the advice that I have says that, despite the bridge being of advancing age, the Geraldton Bridge has the capacity to cope.

The changed traffic flows may mean, however, that the roundabout on the hospital side may require an upgrade to ensure the turning circle for buses is manageable. The inherited financial situation being experienced by the Cassowary Coast Regional Council is well documented. There are also concerns that the sewer infrastructure servicing the existing TAFE site and surrounding area has exceeded its capacity and needs to be upgraded prior to any further development work proceeding in that area. I will work with the council and relevant government agencies to monitor the impact of the new education precinct, as well as any impacts that increased traffic over the bridge will have.

Of course, there is more to the school than bricks and mortar. It takes an individual with forward-thinking ideas to lead a school of tomorrow. Julie Pozzoli was an inspired choice as the first principal of Innisfail State College. I have met with her on a number of occasions since she took over the position and I continue to be impressed by her attitude and approach.

Innisfail State College will be the most modern education facility outside of Brisbane and will do amazing things to enhance employment and training opportunities for students. This is a learning opportunity that does not exist anywhere else in the state and it is exciting to be able to pioneer this concept in Mulgrave.