



Speech by

# Mandy Johnstone

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

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## HERMIT PARK STATE SCHOOL

**Ms JOHNSTONE** (Townsville—ALP) (12.18 pm): Last Tuesday, 11 August 2009, I spent the morning at the Hermit Park State School. Firstly, I want to say thank you to principal Clayton Carnes and the year 7 students for the warm way they welcomed me to their school. I particularly thank the following students who spent part of their day giving me a fantastic and interesting tour of the school: Chaneil Ditton, Rita Fontaine, Josie Bayley, Chelsea Leet and Ruby Bragg. Hermit Park State School is a school of 400 students. Two years ago the school was chosen to trial one-to-one computing with Intel machines. One-to-one means that every student in the class utilises a laptop. Following the success of the trial, the school is now the only state school in Queensland to be operating a sponsored trial with the use of Acer Netbooks in a year 3 classroom. Netbooks are a smaller version of a laptop and are suited to younger children. Education Queensland has supported the trial by purchasing networking equipment, providing professional development and money for computers. Acer has also supported the trial by providing financial support for the machines. The results are being collated and will be published on a state one-to-one learning website.

Following the success of the original trial, the school is now running a sponsored trial using the netbooks that I have just referred to in Mr Cohey's year 3 class. Early indications are that the current trial will be a success. Students are able to take their computers home at night and can complete their homework on them. Mr Cohey, the year 3 class teacher, advised me that on the Tuesday of the first week students came back to school with all of their homework completed, even though they had until Friday to finish it. Additionally, the one-to-one trial means that parents can play an interactive role in monitoring their child's progress in the classroom. Parents are able to log on to the system at any time to check on their child's progress. As a busy working mum, this was of particular interest to me. This is a fantastic step in the right direction that allows working parents another option to remain connected with their local school and engaged in the education of their children.

In this program students will receive a solid education in the traditional education skills such as writing and the arts, but through this program they will get far greater training in digital and computing skills. One of the benefits is that the teacher can check on the work being performed by individual students at any time because all the computers are networked together. This is an example of the Queensland government, a private company and a progressive public school working together for better education outcomes for our children. This trial has the potential to bring benefits not only to Townsville children but also to those in other schools in Queensland.

During my visit last week, I was also given an opportunity to learn about the other ways that Hermit Park State School is giving its students learning experiences that cover the basics and, at the same time, catering for differing learning styles and cultural beliefs, while changing parent expectations about the sorts of skills and information we want our children to have to equip them with the skills they need to take them into the future. Not only is Hermit Park leading the way in information technology but the school body is also leading the way in environmentally sustainable practice, teaching and innovation. It has received numerous environmental awards and currently has projects underway that include a science project

sponsored by JCU that involves studying the life cycle of the barramundi, including water quality and breeding cycles.

**Mrs Sullivan** interjected.

**Ms JOHNSTONE:** It is a great project, isn't it?

**Mrs Sullivan:** It's fantastic.

**Ms JOHNSTONE:** They are growing a range of plants and herbs in the school vegie patch. Of particular interest is the banana circle where different banana varieties are grown that students in the school community can use. They have a chicken coop with laying chooks and the tuckshop uses the eggs. They have an Indigenous Australian beehive that produces medicinal quality honey. On the lawn they are trialling a carbon sequestration project. The principal tells me they are planning to use it as a fundraising opportunity by selling sections of turf to offset carbon emissions. They have a butterfly house and a rainforest with a running brook. The school is looking at installing a windmill to pump underground water to the brook. The school plants a minimum of 300 native plants a year and, wherever possible, they plant trees and shrubs that are native to the Townsville region, which is a dry tropics area. They have a range of other recycling, water and energy saving strategies that they implement as a day-to-day part of their school community. I want to say thank you to the school for providing the leadership, skills, innovation and will to challenge boundaries, and for its investment in our children's futures.