



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR GAVEN

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NERANG STATE SCHOOL

Dr DOUGLAS (Gaven—LNP) (9.53 pm): Great things are happening at Nerang State School which has adopted a number of programs to change the school community's approach to healthy eating and the use of fresh produce in the day-to-day lives of its 380 students and their families. About 20 percent of the school population comes from a Pacific Islander and Maori background which, of course, have different diets as well. Whilst the school has successfully implemented the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program this year and now has a flourishing vegetable garden, it is also educating parents and carers of the importance of using healthy food in their cooking.

The school has started a cooking program for parents and carers in an effort to show families that fresh food is important in their family diets rather than packaged and takeaway food. Parents are able to bring along their food to a cooking class and are shown how to make a delicious and nutritious casserole to feed their young. Principal Rod Kirkland told me last year and then two weeks ago that staff were noticing an increase in prepacked food in students' lunchboxes but now students were adapting their tastebuds to more fresh fruit and vegetables. The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program has been highly successful and has encouraged a whole group of young gardeners at the school. The students can choose food that is healthy and then engage in fun and hands-on experience in growing, harvesting, preparing and sharing fresh and delicious food. Rod Kirkland told me that most students would not normally eat fresh beetroot but after making chocolate and beetroot cake in the classroom recently they could not get enough of this vegetable. As well, the garden is increasing students' knowledge of vegetables. Out of 90 students, one knowledgeable student correctly named a Jerusalem artichoke. Students are currently picking lettuce, rocket, beetroot, chard, parsley and radish.

The garden has been a big community effort with 40 volunteers needed each week to run 10 classes. The school is finding it difficult to get this many volunteers with all the pressures of busy lives these days. The school hopes that the garden will lead to students and families creating their own gardens at home and also help students make lifelong decisions on better food choices. As well, the garden program is being used in other subjects at school such as science, English and maths. Nerang is the only school on the Gold Coast with the garden program.

As mentioned earlier, the school has a high Pacific Islander population and has two clubs for older Maori boys and another for younger Pacific Islanders and Maoris where they can learn dances and songs about their own cultures. Recently, I spent part of my Saturday helping out at the school fete, which was well supported by the community and raised \$8,000. Coming up shortly is the Nerang's Got Talent competition, which is being jointly run by the school along with Nerang State High School and Worongary State Primary School. Congratulations go to principal Rod Kirkland, Steve Bell, Carol Randall, Anne Panitz and all the hardworking staff and volunteers at Nerang State School for making a difference in the lives of their school community.