



Speech by


Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Thursday, 27 October 2011

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Computers in Schools

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (9.45 am): The National Secondary School Computer Fund is an Australian government initiative designed to ensure that every Australian student in years 9 to 12 has access to a computer by 31 December 2011. I am pleased to inform the House that the rollout of computers in Queensland schools is on track. Some 305 schools in Queensland are participating in this program, which will have long-term positive benefits for student learning. By the middle of this year, more than 50,000 computers had been installed in state high schools under this program. A further 7,700 were delivered in August and September this year and more than 20,000 are being delivered this month. The remaining devices—almost 33,000—will be delivered in November and December 2011. The state government is providing additional funding over the next three years to support this Australian government initiative. This funding will be utilised primarily on operational infrastructure and network equipment.

The funding of this scheme from both the Australian and Queensland governments is providing a free computer to every student in years 9 to 12. In some schools, however, the school community has decided that it wants an enhanced service. This includes the capacity to take the computers home overnight and at weekends, longer-life batteries, the cost of licences for enhanced software, accidental damage insurance and a free replacement scheme, otherwise known as a hot swap. In some cases, school communities agree that parents can pay an additional contribution on a voluntary basis if they wish for these enhanced services. Under Queensland government policy, these extra fees can be charged only if they have the support of the school community through the P&C association.

Irrespective of whether a school introduces an enhanced option for student use of laptops, every student in Queensland classrooms will have access to the computer technology they need to complete their studies at school. Furthermore, these enhanced schemes are entirely voluntary. If parents either do not want to be involved or cannot afford the extra payments, they do not have to pay them. These fees are similar to fees that are contributed by parents for enhanced vocational education programs or sporting excellence programs or textbook hire schemes. The common element to all of these schemes is that they have been endorsed or supported by the school community. My concern with the matter raised in the media this morning is that it appears that the voluntary nature of these schemes has not been fully explained to the school community. This morning I have asked the Director-General of the Department of Education and Training to ensure that these enhanced schemes are fully explained to parents and the broader school community. This computer for students program is a very worthwhile initiative and will have significant long-term benefits for Queensland children.