




Speech by
Desley Scott

MEMBER FOR WOODRIDGE

Hansard Tuesday, 29 May 2012

HALL, MRS J

 **Mrs SCOTT** (Woodridge—ALP) (9.45 pm): The 30th of March seems a long time ago now. However, this is my first opportunity to speak of a very remarkable teacher who sadly has just retired following 16 years of service at Woodridge State School. It was Harmony Day at Woodridge primary, a day when I delight to be seated in that hall as the many student groups perform to the cheers of their fellow students.

You need to picture a hall filled with excited students from every corner of the globe, many of them in their national dress. Our Aboriginal and Islander children are usually the largest Australian group. We then enjoy Pacific Islanders, Maori, Burmese, Indian, various African groups, Middle Eastern and many mixed groups. A particular favourite is the Burundi drumming group. However, it was a very special day because this was Mrs Hall's last day. Judith Hall was head of the intensive learning support and ESL department in the school during all the years as waves of refugee children arrived at the school, many with no English language at all. Judith is a warm, inviting teacher with a great love for all of her young charges.

At the end of the performances, all of the children who had arrived in the last six months from war torn lands—some 40 or 50 of them—stood in three rows on choir seats and sang in the most beautiful English, with voices like angels, the song *No Matter What* by Boyzone. As they sang the final verses, they held up letters spelling out 'Goodbye Mrs Hall', 'We Love You', 'We will miss you.' They sang their hearts out—

No matter if the sun don't shine
Or if the skies are blue
No matter what the end is
My life began with you

I can't deny what I believe
I can't be what I'm not
I know this love's forever
That's all that matters now
No matter what.

The tissues were passed around and the program wound up, but there were more stories to tell. The former refugee students had no idea what retirement meant and thought Mrs Hall would be returning. When they discovered she would not be returning, one little one came to her to say, 'Miss, how you buy your rice? You can come and live with me.' And other invitations followed. They thought that without her work she would have no money and nowhere to live. We are indeed living in a lucky country. Woodridge primary will never forget the kindness and love and the way you nurtured these young students in a new land, a new environment, many enjoying education for the first time and all looking forward to a bright future—they will always remember Mrs Hall.