



Speech by


## Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

Hansard Tuesday, 13 November 2012

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### MOTION: EDUCATION, FUNDING

 **Mr WELLINGTON** (Nicklin—Ind) (6.04 pm): I rise to participate in the debate on this motion. I note that the second paragraph of the opposition's motion is very simple and very specific. It states, 'Calls on the Newman government to ensure adequate funding for both state and non-state education sectors.' In other words, it is calling for fair and reasonable funding. When I considered this matter, I listened to the Minister for Education's amendment and his commitment to the education sector in Queensland. It prompted me to reflect on a letter that I received from the Gulf Christian College. Earlier, I spoke with the member for Mount Isa, because that college is in his electorate. He shares my concerns. On behalf of the Gulf Christian College and the member for Mount Isa, I will read the letter into the *Hansard* record. It states—

I write in relation to the announced cuts in Recurrent Grants by the Newman Government to all Non-Government schools. While I understand and accept the need for the Government to work towards balancing their budget, and that we all have a part to play, I cannot understand or justify why funding to our most remote and disadvantaged schools has been cut by almost double the percentage of larger and more affluent schools. It would appear that the 'needs' component of our funding has suffered the largest proportion of the total funding cuts.

I am the CEO of Gulf Christian College in Normanton in far north Queensland. Our primary school of 51 students, 65% of whom are indigenous, is remote, isolated and disadvantaged. The Newman Government has cut our annual recurrent grant by 21.9%. I am also the Head of College of Nambour Christian College on the Sunshine Coast with 1100 students P-12. Our funding has been cut by 9.8%. Where is the justice? The average reduction in funding across for independent schools has been below 10%.

Gulf Christian College is a needy school and the cost of providing quality education in Normanton is significantly higher than in the south east corner of our State. A 21.9% reduction in funding will result in considerable grief to this small school. This will mean staffing cuts and resources will not be able to be purchased.

I request that you take up the case for Gulf Christian College with the Education Minister in the interests of fairness and equity and for our students in Normanton.

That letter is signed by Mr Bruce Campbell, the chief executive officer of the Gulf Christian College and head of college at the Nambour Christian College. The member for Mount Isa asked that I read that letter into the parliamentary record. Earlier last week, I tried to organise a meeting with the minister to raise this matter, but unfortunately the minister did not have the time. Therefore, I thought it was appropriate that I take this opportunity to put those matters on the parliamentary record. Hopefully, the minister or one of the government members might respond to these important issues.

I note that many of our schools are finding more and more children with high support needs are entering the school system. Often their disabilities are not diagnosed before they get to school. There is a need for increased funding in the prep and prep areas for children with suspected disabilities. At the moment, our schools receive funding based on day 8 enrolment figures. Those figures determine the number of teachers and teacher aides allocated to the schools. Often, children are not diagnosed until months after entering the school system. I understand that our schools are seeing an increased number of children with autism spectrum disorders who have not been picked up prior to entering our schools. The variety of disorders in children that our schools are seeing are not limited to the autism area. There are also issues such as speech and hearing disorders that have not been diagnosed and are not being addressed. Our schools are finding that many of those children have not had the social networking

opportunities needed for their disorders to be picked up. Places such as day care, playgroups and kindergartens would be able to alert a parent to a possible problem with a child, but many of the children presenting to our prep classes have not had those opportunities. The ideal situation for our schools would be for increased funding to assist with diagnosing and dealing with disorders in the kindergarten and prep system. That way, a child would be identified as needing support prior to the day 8 deadline.

I reiterate that the motion moved by the opposition is very simple. It simply calls on the government to have some fairness, some reasonableness and some equity in the allocation of resources in schools throughout all of Queensland.

*(Time expired)*