




Speech By
Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

ADJOURNMENT

St Mary's College

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (7.10 pm): I am very pleased to rise tonight to pay tribute to one of the south-east region's finest educational institutions, St Mary's College, and the tradition and historically important work of the Sisters of Mercy. St Mary's College in Ipswich is my old high school and I am proud to be a graduate of a fine school, with a fine history and which continues to do fine work. It could not be a more apt time to pay tribute to the work of this school and church, a landmark in the Ipswich area, which this week is celebrating its 150th anniversary. I have certainly been looking forward to attending the 150th anniversary of what was one of the first Catholic schools established outside Brisbane.

It is 150 years since the sisters arrived in Brisbane from Ireland. After the great adversity of their journey they were taken into the hearts and the homes of the people of Ipswich. By all accounts, they faced immediate financial hardship but, thanks to the generosity of local Catholic families in the area at the time, they were able to remain and to settle to offer strong Catholic education. This order of sisters left Ipswich in 2009 to retire in Brisbane but their influence today could not be stronger. They possessed incredible resilience and steely determination. They selflessly gave to the community. They left behind the gift of caring for, nurturing and educating generations of women in the region.

The first St Mary's Church, made of wooden slabs and shingles, was built on the corner of Mary and Elizabeth streets in Ipswich from 1849 and was founded by Father Eugene Luckie. Father Luckie told his congregation at the time of his great plans to build the church, made possible by a government grant of £80. A second and bigger St Mary's Church was built on the same site in about 1860 under the guidance of Father William McGinty, a very active church leader who travelled extensively in the area and was the force behind several church buildings in the region. The church that stands today was built in 1904 after the original church was badly damaged in the 1893 floods. It stands as a proud monument to the Sisters today, as does the convent known as Mercy House. I am happy to report that after a three-year renovation process, it was reopened this week. This was also made possible with a small grant from the former Labor government.

I would like to pay tribute to the nuns and the teachers. They have done a brilliant job over the years and they deserve to be congratulated. I look forward to attending the 150-year celebrations at St Mary's, especially to those being held on Saturday evening when I look forward to catching up with current principal Deidre Anderson and my old debating team including Linda and Jackie.