




Speech By
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ADJOURNMENT

Far North Queensland, Education

 **Mr PITT** (Mulgrave—ALP) (9.03 pm): Earlier this year, the Labor opposition released a discussion paper about the concept of same-sex state schools and we will continue to look at other areas of innovation in our education system. In the Far North, I have long held the view that we need to tap into the existing strengths of our secondary schools to formalise a niche school model that could see schools of excellence in various endeavours, for example, sports and vocational education at Bentley Park College or agriculture, multimedia and creative arts at Gordonvale State High School.

That is why I add my excitement to that of the entire Innisfail community about a federal funding grant for Innisfail State College. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced \$1.5 million to establish a health trade training centre to include training rooms, a hospital ward and a dental examination room. These grants have been around since 2008 and are responsible for some great facilities and training opportunities in our region's schools such as SchoolTech and Marine Tech, as well as others in agriculture and mining.

When college principal Kate MacDonald and her team looked at the trends for graduates in terms of career choices and matched that with the areas of skills shortage, it was clear that many of Innisfail's students pursued careers in the various health fields. Among other things, the establishment of the Innisfail Health Training Centre will help stem the flow of many of our young people who are forced to move to attend city based tertiary institutions.

Students will be able to commence dental assistant studies or nursing studies in their senior secondary schooling and continue post-secondary in Innisfail. Strong relationships already exist between the college and James Cook University and the Tropical North Queensland TAFE. Students will be able to study a Certificate III in Nursing and progress to a Diploma in Nursing, before moving onto a Bachelor of Nursing at JCU. Work is underway regarding the Certificate III Dental Assistant with the Australian Dental Association Queensland. The JCU Dental School, which is another initiative strongly supported by Labor, is producing 80 quality ready-to-practice dentists each year, but the Sunshine Coast is currently the only facility offering training for dental assistants. Innisfail is well positioned to provide that same training, which will lead to real job opportunities.

There are many trade training centres that focus on areas such as engineering, construction, automotive and agriculture. It has been suggested that we may see a move to focus TAFE courses offered on the LNP's four pillars of mining, construction, tourism and agriculture. I have said in this place before that this approach may leave out one of the most important growth areas. For example, mining is the only pillar that has seen large jobs growth and it has only grown at around one-third of jobs in the health and community care sector. That is why I am so pleased about this funding. It will set Innisfail State College apart as a future focussed secondary school, not only in terms of the needs of students but also in terms of the needs of the whole community and the whole state.

Some people may be aware that Far North Queensland has been one of the most improved regions in NAPLAN between 2008 and 2012. No doubt much hard work has been done by many teachers and, of course, students and their parents. Before I finish this evening, I want to say that integral to this improvement has been the leadership of Regional Executive Director Clive Dixon, who will be retiring on 20 September. I wish Clive well in his retirement. I also bid farewell to 'super principal' Bruce Houghton. As sad as I am to see Bruce leaving Gordonvale, I hope he will enjoy the new challenge that lies ahead for him at Woree.