




Speech By
Patrick Weir

MEMBER FOR CONDAMINE

Record of Proceedings, 8 March 2018

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Toowoomba, High Schools

 **Mr WEIR** (Condamine—LNP) (2.06 pm): I would like to speak today about the growing need for a new high school in the south-western region of Toowoomba. Recently I launched an e-petition to highlight the need for further secondary education infrastructure in this rapidly expanding area. Areas to the south-west of Toowoomba are experiencing significant population growth and high schools in the catchment area of Harristown and Centenary Heights are nearing capacity.

Census data shows that the Westbrook-Drayton area had an enumerated population of 3,861 in the 2011 census and a dwelling count of 1,331. In 2016 the population had grown to 4,505 with an increase in dwellings of 1,605. The average household size in the Westbrook-Drayton area is 3.04, which would indicate households with young families.

The Queensland education website states that Centenary Heights State High School has an enrolment capacity of 1,560 while Harristown State High School has an enrolment capacity of 1,703. In 2016 there was an increase in enrolments to 1,569 students at Centenary Heights and 1,652 at Harristown, meaning both schools have experienced significant growth.

The Queensland Treasury Office of Economic and Statistical Research population projections from 2011 state that in the Toowoomba district there was a population of 121,861 with a projected figure of 199,247 by 2031. A development proposal currently before council for final approval at Westbrook would see the addition of 1,500 dwellings plus a shopping complex. This would double the size of the town of Westbrook.

I would urge the state government to investigate a business model for a high school in the south-west area of Toowoomba that will accommodate these growth areas and reduce the pressure on Harristown and Centenary Heights high schools, which are reaching capacity. Families in the region deserve access to high-quality facilities, and sensible travel requirements and student-teacher ratios. A planned high school in this growth corridor would bring some certainty and, indeed, help to attract further residential and business growth. The intention of the petition is to forward plan. We are looking to identify a location and purchase the land so that we are prepared for this growth. We know that in the boom area of Highfields it took 10 years to get that high school in place. We are trying to get ahead of the game and not be caught behind it.