



House of Assembly

Tuesday 30 May 2017

LIGHT ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)

(15:34): While parliament was not sitting last week, I had the opportunity to visit some schools in my electorate and to catch up with school leaderships and with students to gauge how they are going and to hear about the plans and ambitions of the students at those schools.

The first school I visited was Mark Oliphant College where I met with students from the junior primary and senior years. I spoke to the senior students about their ambitions and what they propose to do next year following their graduation, and I asked them how school was going.

I received very positive feedback from the school, and I must confess that the students from Mark Oliphant College looked rather splendid in their school uniform.

I put on the record that I fully support the school leadership, the schoolteachers and the governing council to have a school dress code in place. I think it is important, and I fully support it. Whilst I am not in a position to say what is the right dress code, I do think dress code is important for the area.

It is important for schools, and schools are about having pride in your school, pride in yourself and pride in your community. So, I fully support the actions of the governing council and the school leadership team at the school, and I know that the teachers support it as well.

When I was a student some decades ago in the mid-1970s, the school dress code went out of fashion for a period of time, but I was not one of those people who thought it was a great idea. I thought there were a lot of practical reasons why dress code was very good for students, for the school and also for the families.

As I said, students at Mark Oliphant had a really positive attitude towards their school and also towards the community at large.

The other school I visited was the Adelaide North Special School, which is adjacent to Mark Oliphant.

I would like to put on record my thanks to the school leadership and the governing council at that school who do an enormous job in providing learning and pastoral

opportunities for students who are living with a disability.

Special schools are for those students who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a mainstream school or even a special education unit in a school.

These are students who require additional support, and I really would like to commend the teaching staff and the leadership team for treating these students with great dignity and giving them opportunities to learn with dignity.

I had the opportunity to visit Trinity College, and I met the head of the college, Nick Hately, and the college captains and prefects.

I was taken on a tour of the new school pavilion, but I was unable to attend the official opening. Trinity College offers a whole range of programs to students and families in the area and provides wonderful educational opportunities for students who choose to attend that college, including sport, arts, academic and cultural opportunities.

The school offers a very broad program to its students, including vocational education, and they do a wonderful job in developing wonderful young graduates.

I also visited the Gawler District College, an R-12 school, and met students in the junior primary and senior years.

I also had a discussion about the special focus on STEM subjects at

the college, and the school is doing a wonderful job.

Since it integrated the preschool, primary school and high school, it has gone gangbusters and now is full to the brim. The school is doing really well in terms of providing public education to students and their families in the area.

I was also fortunate to be invited to the official opening of Playford College, which is just outside my electorate. Some families from within my area would go there. I met the chair of the governing council of this new college and the principal, Rainer Mayer. I must confess that it is a bold and wonderful journey that this new college is undertaking.

It is a college in the Muslim faith, in the Shia tradition. What impresses me about this particular school is the lengths it is going to make sure that it is integrating with the local community.

At the opening, it was very clear that while it has a Shia tradition (no different from the Catholic tradition or other traditions), it is very keen to make sure it becomes part of the community at large and welcomes students from other faiths as well.

I also attended Munno Para school governing council, which I will talk about next time.

Time expired.

Debate resumed at 17.08

The Hon. A. PICCOLO (Light)

(17:08): Earlier today, I discussed some of the schools in my electorate, and I visited some of them last week.

I would now like to continue those remarks. There were a couple of other schools I visited that I have not had the opportunity to discuss, and one of those is Xavier College, which is a Catholic college in my electorate.

It is a year 8 to 12 school in the Salesian tradition, and there I met a number of students and we had a discussion about their plans for the future. We discussed their school and the facilities at the school.

I was given an opportunity to visit the new student hub, which is part of a recent investment in facilities at the college. The student hub is a resource centre, a library and a whole range of other facilities in a learning space for students, and it is quite an impressive building.

I also visited the remodelled chapel at the college, and they have done a wonderful job there.

It is a place that is of obvious spiritual importance to the college.

I also looked at their native gardens and agricultural centre.

I mention these things because it was obvious to me from visiting these schools—not only Xavier but Trinity, Gawler and District College, Mark Oliphant College, Northern Adelaide Special School and Playford College—that they all take a very holistic approach to their students' wellbeing.

Xavier, for example, has a special emphasis on wellbeing. They have a student group that promotes wellbeing amongst peers and a group of young people who are involved in developing programs for their peers.

For example, Trinity College is part of the resilience movement, and their teachers have undertaken training and are building resilience in their students.

Gawler and District College is establishing a wellbeing program as well, and I had a chat with the staff member in charge of that program.

Mark Oliphant College has put a lot of time, effort and resources into making sure that not only are students' academic requirements being met but also their cultural, spiritual and pastoral needs.

All the schools in my area put an emphasis on the pastoral care of their students to grow the students not only academically but also as human beings and citizens of our state.

I commend and congratulate all the schools in my area on the very good job they do.

In addition to attending those schools, I also attended a governing council meeting at Munno Para Primary School, a school that faces a number of challenges.

It is situated in an area that unfortunately has not received a great deal of investment from either the private sector or

government and is only funded at this point in time as a level 2 school.

I have taken that matter up with the Minister for Education because, given the level of disadvantage at that school, I think it should be funded at a higher level.

I understand that the minister, through the department, has asked for that funding to be reviewed.

Approximately 30 per cent of the school's students have some sort of learning difficulty or are living with some type of disability. That is quite a high number, so it is disappointing that, because of the ranking or the level of the school, it does not get more resources to assist with that.

The principal, Belinda Kopania, is doing a wonderful job with the resources she has, and the teacher body at the school is really A1.

They are working with a lot of NGOs to support their students and the parent body.

The school is innovative, in the sense that they pool resources from a whole range of locations and institutions in the area to make sure that their students do not miss out.

They run a number of programs to make sure that the young people in this area get a fair go, get a good education and get a fair start in life.

One thing that Munno Para Primary School faces, (and to some extent Munno Para preschool as

well) is that they are in a community with a high level of welfare and very few resources. For example, it does not even have a local shop. However, I would like to commend Life Church, a Christian church in the area.

Life Church does an amazing job providing a whole range of services to the community, including a kids' playgroup and a group for mothers. They also run a teenager program and a men's program, and two days a week they run a food program for people in need. The church does all that work in the community without any support from the government. They raise money through their own resources and congregation and the donations they receive.

I would like to commend Life Church for what they are doing.

I would also like to mention the work that Renewal SA is doing in terms of renewal in that area. The department has started to look at the area as a possible renewal project and they are playing their part. It is good to see a whole range of institutions in the locality, including the Playford city council, which put up its hand, work together to improve the quality of life of not only students and young people in that community but also residents and families in general.

There is another group I would like to mention in the context of schools.

I am a member of the Northern Mens Wellbeing Network.

This is a network of men and women who provide support and services to men and boys in the community.

For example, the Smith Family is an organisation that is part of the network. They provide a number of scholarships to children in Munno Para Primary School and in other schools in the area. I know, for example, that Centacare and Anglicare provide services to students in schools in this community.

The City of Playford also provides a number of supports to this community through its men's health programs and other community programs.

Despite the challenges faced by these communities, they are doing very well. They are building resilience and also trying to take control of their future.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the school leadership teams and the governing councils in my electorate on doing such a wonderful job preparing our young people for the future not only academically but also as citizens of our communities.

At 17 : 17 the house adjourned until Wednesday 31 May 2017 at 11 : 00 .

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