



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

ADJOURNMENT

Namadgi School

SPEECH

Wednesday, 15 June 2011

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Questioner
Speaker Ms BRODTMANN

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(Canberra) (NaN.NaN pm)

Ms BRODTMANN (Canberra) (19:45): I rise tonight to speak about the great work being done at Namadgi School in Kambah in my electorate. A few weeks ago it was my real privilege to join the new Deputy Chief Minister of the ACT and Minister for Education and Training, Andrew Barr, in the official opening of this new state-of-the-art purpose-built school. It was a great day with many hundreds of students, parents, teachers and members of the community present to see the opening and tour the facilities.

The school is designed to become an active hub and heart for the local community. Several features have been included for use by the community such as tennis courts, a gymnasium, a hall, performing arts facilities, a library, seminar and community rooms, and a language school for children of non-English-speaking backgrounds. This introductory English centre caters for primary school-age students in the Tuggeranong-Weston Creek area who have recently arrived in Australia and need assistance to learn English before enrolling in their local school.

It was also my very great privilege to open the new \$2.3 million Urambi Environment Centre, which received \$2 million in funding under the Gillard government's Building the Education Revolution program. This centre includes spaces for food technology classrooms and dining areas, and I understand there are also plans underway for each class to grow their own vegetables to use in the centre. There was a garden outside and I planted a magnolia in honour of the official opening. The centre also includes a collaborative learning area, environmental learning classroom and a garden room. The centre was built to the highest environmental standards and achieved a five-star educational green rating.

I was very fortunate to be given a tour and briefing of the centre and the other science labs at the school by Namadgi science teacher Mark Merritt. Mark was the 2005 recipient of the Prime Minister's Prize for Excellence in Science Teaching in Primary Schools. He is one of those truly inspiring teachers who can motivate not only his students to develop a lifelong passion for learning but also other teachers to refine their practices and sustain their passion for teaching. It was great to see him interact with students on the

day and to see their eyes light up as they spoke to me about the projects they and Mark had worked on in class, particularly the mini ecosystems. They had developed these with little deserts, little rainforests and a whole range of other things. It was a really interesting experiment. It was clear to me, even from those brief encounters with the students, that they were proud of their work and were developing a keen understanding and passion for science, which is a great gift. Mark came to the ACT from Western Australia and I think he is probably a great loss to the school system in the west, but WA's loss is very much Canberra's gain and I hope to see Mark continue to contribute to the lives of ACT school children.

Seeing the work being done by Mark and his students really proved to me the benefit of the BER scheme. To me the BER project is about linking Australia's fantastic teachers, such as Mark Merritt, with the latest in infrastructure and technology so that they can truly realise the potential of their students. The BER is about giving teachers the tools they need to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of students and to ensure that the full transformative effect of education can be realised. The BER is an investment, and I use that word deliberately because it is an investment in this country's future to ensure that students and teachers get the opportunity to learn in 21st century facilities. It is an opportunity they rightly deserve.

The BER projects have been much derided by those opposite—I think sadly and unnecessarily so. In my brief time here as the member for Canberra I have been called upon to visit many schools and facilities funded by the BER scheme. At each of these facilities the community have been very strong supporters of the program and great supporters of the new libraries, classrooms, performance areas and all of the other great works that have been going on as a result of this terrific program. The BER program is one of the largest investments in education infrastructure in our nation's history. Nationwide, the Gillard government has invested \$16.2 billion in projects such as the Urambi Environment Centre that I opened at Namadgi School.

I am proud to be part of a government that supports great teachers like Mark Merritt, that supports great schools and community hubs such as Namadgi School,

and, most importantly, that supports students and understands the power of education.