



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

ADJOURNMENT

McMillan Electorate: St Joseph's Primary School

SPEECH

Tuesday, 22 November 2011

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP

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Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (20:49): This address is taken from a speech given by Greg Synan, the principal of St Joseph's Primary School in Korumburra, when I was there for the opening of part of their new school. The school is in Korumburra, which is a magnificent small town in my electorate.

He spoke of the investment in our children as they are the future of our great country, Australia. He went on to quote some of his colleagues:

They always try to meet and know the parents well, because it helps them to forgive the children.

He then said:

Well, that is not the case here at St. Joe's, because at St Joe's they have a wonderful parent body who are committed to giving their children the best possible start.

I was so impressed with his speech. Mr Synan spoke of some telltale signs at the school:

Hugs and kisses at drop off time in the morning. I see a lot of those. Check the lunch boxes. Are students' basic needs being met at St Joe's? Absolutely! Is the school uniform clean and showing pride? A big tick here at St Joe's. Are parents hearing their children read at home and helping with homework? Yes! Do the parents support and help the school? Absolutely!

And of course there was just one more thing Mr Synan mentioned:

Are the children smiling?

Well, you can be assured that the students at St Joe's are always smiling.

The principal pointed out that you always know if your dog is healthy when he has a wet nose! Well, there were a lot of wet noses at St Joe's the day I was there. One little secret they shared with me was that the parents of St Josephs are the best cooks. I can vouch for that because I saw the morning tea and had a taste of one of those very special fruit cakes. Thank you to the person who made it.

The second component to this investment portfolio is the staff at St Joe's. Greg went on to say:

Russell, I need you to go back and let the people on Capital Hill know that the teachers at St Joe's are among the best you will find. Good teaching is more about who you are than what you teach. Good teachers teach from the heart more than from the head. Good teachers explain complexity, but gifted teachers, like the ones we have here at St Joe's, not only explain complexity they reveal simplicity. We know that when a student fails so too have we!

Russell, please go back to Canberra and let your colleagues know that the teachers at St Joe's are lovers of life and lovers of learning, but most importantly they know and love each and every individual student here at St Joseph's. We have high expectations for who they are and who they will be. These 'buds', these beautiful little people, are the reason we love teaching, specifically teaching here at St Josephs at Korumburra!

Lastly he said:

Russell, I would like to discuss the greatest yielding component of this investment the government of the day is putting into our school—the real gold—and it is sitting here before us: the children of St Joseph's at Korumburra, the children of Australia and the future of Australia.

I have been to hundreds of school openings. I have been to many school events. I have never in my life heard a principal speak with such compassion and passion about his school, his students, his parent bodies, his teachers and the school itself.

For all the money that has been poured into primary education, I wish this nation were wealthy enough that we could do the same for secondary education. I will get into trouble because they will say, 'He is praising the BER. We will use that tomorrow in question time.' Actually, I do not care. What I care about is this: the Catholic schools, through the system in Victoria, have done amazing things in their schools with the money they have been given. When I first went to McMillan in 1996 and then left in 1998 and then came back in, we had not spent as a nation any money in those Catholic schools for 25 years. And now we have. We are praising those students. I am praising this principal. I am praising what the schools have done and the contribution they have also made—the extra money, the extra effort, they have made the money go further. I would like to take you to St Joe's at Korumburra so that you could stand there in the classroom and look out of the sheet of glass over their oval and then to the broader countryside in Korumburra. No wonder Mr Synan was able to speak with such compassion and passion and professionalism. He obviously put a lot of work into the speech he gave that day.