



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Main Committee

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Ballarat Electorate: Schools Funding

SPEECH

Wednesday, 7 February 2007

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker King, Catherine, MP

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Ms KING (Ballarat) (9.41 am)—I was very pleased to be able to welcome the government's announcement of \$1.9 million of Investing in Our Schools funding for schools in my electorate this week. The amount of money granted to schools in my electorate is a tribute to school councils, the staff, principals and, in many instances, students who have worked hard on their applications. I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate the principals, staff, parents and students who worked so hard in submitting them.

It is a terrific example of the commitment and dedication of your respective school communities. Having visited almost all of these schools, I know how worthwhile these projects are. Alfredton Primary School will be constructing a specialised learning area. Delacombe Primary School will be enhancing its play equipment. Grevillea Park Primary School, in a poorer area in my electorate, will be upgrading its computer equipment. Miners Rest Primary School will be putting in shade structures. We are experiencing unprecedented sunshine in Ballarat, I have to say, so shade structures are extremely important. Redan Primary School is going to be fencing its sporting fields and improving some of those. Sebastopol Primary School will be looking towards improving its play equipment and library equipment.

Unfortunately, in this announcement there was one glaring omission and that was of Bacchus Marsh Primary School. Bacchus Marsh Primary School is an outstanding school. It has an energetic and imaginative principal, a dedicated and caring staff, engaged parents and, of course, a fantastic bunch of students. It can also boast of being Victoria's oldest primary school. It was therefore extremely disappointing and frustrating, after it had submitted a fantastic application for the third round of Investing in Our Schools, for it to be knocked back.

What has frustrated the school community so much is not only that the funding would go towards much needed improvements to their oval but also it is the second consecutive time that they have been knocked back. Bacchus Marsh Primary School missed out during the second round of Investing in Our Schools last year. Having worked with the school on its application, I know that it was first class and met all of the guidelines laid down by the department. I made a number of representations to the office of the parliamentary secretary as to why the school had missed out in that second round. The advice was simply that the application was terrific but that there just were not enough funds to go around.

It was therefore with some confidence that the school submitted in the third round, hoping that it would be successful this time. Once again, on finding out that it was unsuccessful, we contacted the parliamentary secretary's office and were told once again the application was perfectly okay but that there were just insufficient funds. Frankly, this is an inadequate response to a school that has worked extremely hard on its application. It is an extremely large school with a growing population in its district. I would have to say that the least it could expect after the work it has done is some support through the Investing in Our Schools program.