



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

School Chaplains

SPEECH

Wednesday, 1 October 2014

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Broadbent, Russell, MP	Question No.

Mr BROADBENT (McMillan) (09:45): Some considerable time ago I spoke of a special door in a school, with a special name on it. As life throws up its difficulties for children in schools, I spoke about that door having a sign on it that says 'Chaplain'. That door had 'Chaplain' written on it. Sometimes the child has nowhere else to turn when the teacher has not got an answer for that child and knows the child is in difficulty and cannot speak about it for reasons as outlined by members that have spoken on difficulties for legal aid et cetera.

I spoke then under the Howard government of the day, who had introduced a chaplaincy program at a cost of some millions of dollars for the benefit of Australian students. The program was a howling success. My electorate goes from Wilsons Promontory all the way to Mount Baw Baw, from Pakenham all the way to Moe-Newborough. Every school that I go to that has a chaplain tells me what a marvellous asset to the school it is. And then someone came along and said, 'We can't have chaplains in schools because they are proselytising and we don't want that to happen,' and the High Court agreed with them. So it was going to end. This was a tragedy for many schools. What is more, a lot of my Catholic schools were not getting a chaplain because, yes, they can get a welfare officer through this program but they were not getting it because the priest was the chaplain and you could not have two chaplains.

So under this program, now that it has changed, what has happened is that the federal government has gone to the states and said: 'We're not allowed to administer this. Here's the money, states; you administer it.' And now every school in the electorate of every member in this place can apply for funding for a chaplain. You can describe it as a welfare worker; you can give it another name if you like. It can be secondary chaplain; I do not mind what it is. But I know that children's futures will be changed by the fact there is a door in a school and on that door it has 'Chaplain'. It is for those young girls and boys that we care so much about and put our energy into because they are our future. They are everything we work for. They are what this nation is all about. They are what this parliament cares about. We fund education, but now we are going to fund through the states. Every school in my electorate will be able to apply for this funding for the benefit of a chaplain in their school—even my tiny Catholic schools who have missed out and need all the help that they can get.