



# PRIME MINISTER

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WOODRIDGE STATE HIGH SCHOOL - QUEENSLAND  
9 SEPTEMBER 1986

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

We all have a stake in education.

Parents are vitally concerned to see that their children get the best possible start in life, with all the knowledge and skills they will need for a fulfilling and productive future.

Young people want to know that they are being given the foundation for making the choices they want for their future.

And as a nation, we depend so much on the skills and creativity of our people - skills which we expect the education system to impart.

Our future quality of life will be determined by the qualities of Australians more than anything else. Natural resources, agriculture, manufacturing industry - they all have a place to play, but ultimately, the most important resource is people.

The whole community therefore has a vital interest in education. What is really pleasing at Woodridge is the way the whole community has come together in creating this new hall, and thereby creating a facility for the school and the community alike.

The best educational developments only happen when there is co-operation between all the education partners. With parents, teachers and students working together, and with the support of State and Federal Governments, real improvements can be made to education.

Because my Government recognises the importance of education, both for individuals and for national development, we make a substantial contribution to the States to assist in improving education.

This year we will spend over \$35 million on capital works in Queensland schools alone, and \$26 million of that will be spent on Government schools.

We also allocate substantial funds to assist with the running costs of Queensland schools. This year, nearly \$68 million will be spent under the Commonwealth's General Recurrent Grants Program on Queensland Government schools. For 1987 that amount will rise to \$72 million.

The Government's commitment to education has been maintained even in the period of economic stringency we now face. The centrepiece of our assistance to schools is the general recurrent funding program which has set increases in funds to government and non-government schools in legislation until 1988.

This commitment is part of our strategy for the young people of Australia: Priority One. By creating better education opportunities for young Australians we are giving them more choices in life and the skills to make better use of those choices. We will also all reap the benefits of the more productive lives highly skilled young people will lead.

Part of the commitment of Priority One is that all young Australians should have the benefit of greater opportunities. My Government has the goal of equity at the core of all our initiatives.

It used to be the case that only a small minority of Australian students stayed on at school past the compulsory years. The last two years of schools catered exclusively for those headed for higher education.

That pattern of education is simply not good enough today. If Australians are to compete in the increasingly competitive international market, then the level of skill across the whole population must be increased.

One way of making us increasingly competitive is for it to be the norm, rather than the exception, that young people complete a full secondary education, or its equivalent.

In 1984 my Government introduced a major new program into schools and technical and further education - the Participation and Equity Program.

The program's goals are ambitious. It aims to change the whole experience of school or college to create genuine opportunities for students who were previously excluded. It is a program which involves the whole of the school and wider community in making changes to curriculum, school organisation, assessment and accreditation procedures; and in building closer links between schools, TAFE colleges, employers and community organisations.

Woodridge State High School has been part of the Participation and Equity Program since it began. Last year the school received \$37,000 of Participation and Equity Program funding from the Federal Government; and this year is one of 75 target schools, allocated a total of \$1.9 million of the funds provided to Queensland Government schools under the program of \$3.8 million.

I know that this school has initiated a variety of activities as part of the Participation and Equity Program, including a literacy program, parent planning nights, special education projects involving a cluster of schools, and the formation of girls action committee. The program has shown results, too - an increase in the number of students going to Year 11 from 53 per cent in 1983-84 to 62 per cent in 1984-85.

The activities under the Participation and Equity Program may sound varied, but they have the same common purpose, a purpose which is shared by schools around the country. That is, to get all students, and their parents and teachers, really involved with their schooling and thinking about ways to make it better.

This theme of co-operation for better education leads me very easily into the formal reason for my visit - to open this fine new assembly hall. The building of the hall, I am pleased to be able to say, is a prime example of the Federal Government's community employment program in action.

Through the CEP we have been able to provide funding of \$470,000, out of a project cost of \$610,000.

As well as assisting Woodridge High School to acquire this new facility, the CEP grant also saw 55 people employed during the construction phase.

So, together with the Woodridge State High School Parents and Citizens' Association and the staff and students of this school we have been able to all work to improve facilities at this school.

This hall, then, and the community co-operation which led to its construction, is a measure of the support for better education in this country.

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