

As the March election approaches, I would like to share a good news story about a local Tamworth school. Tamworth West Public School was under a cloud for quite a few years because of proposals by a developer to purchase their school's site in order to expand an adjoining shopping centre. After years of uncertainty, and following vigorous lobbying from the teachers, parents and friends of this wonderful school, the proposal was rejected and the school was given certainty regarding its future.

The same National Party candidate is contesting the March 2011 election, as contested the election in 2007. Sadly, the Nationals are once again running an untruthful and misleading campaign, stating that nothing has happened across the electorate over the past 4 years, so today I would like to correct the record, beginning with investment in local education. Following the 2006 State Budget, the Nationals rushed into print complaining:

“There is no announcement of funding for the Tamworth West Public School. The people of Tamworth have lobbied hard for funding for this project for many years, and they deserve some answers from this Government. It’s the kids who have missed out.”

I am not exactly sure what project was being referred to, however I would like to share some of the investments that have been delivered over the past 4 years at this wonderful school. Since the last election, more than \$3.4 million has been spent at Tamworth West to provide the best possible learning opportunities for their students, while making the school an appealing and welcoming place for teachers, support staff and the mums, dads and carers who entrust this school with their children's education.

Tamworth West Public School has 21 permanent learning spaces and no demountables. Safety at the school has been improved with the installation of a perimeter fence at a cost of \$153,040 under the Integration program, plus \$21,140 in other fencing improvements. Upgrades have been carried out to timber fascias, sections of drainage and stormwater runoff, asphalt playground areas, and grassed play

areas costing \$112,705 under the Upgrades and Additions program. Fibro in the school grounds was removed, with just under \$50,000 of remediation works carried out.

To cater for children with disabilities, ramps and accessible toilet facilities have been installed, along with appropriate wheelchair access to three buildings at a cost of \$23,663. Classrooms were refurbished at a cost of \$62,750 under the Upgrading and Additions program, a \$57,836 facility fitout was undertaken under the Upgrading and Additions program, and an internal upgrade of the toilet facilities costing \$144,175 occurred under the Principal's Priority Building Projects – Toilet Upgrades program.

One of the first speeches I gave in this place was during May 2003, followed a visit to Tamworth West Public. I observed 29 computers operating from a system of power boards that were plugged into just 3 power points. That matter was resolved quickly after my visit, and I am pleased that a further electrical upgrade has been undertaken costing \$28,690, in addition to \$6320 of new cabling.

\$37,700 has been spent on air cooling for the classrooms, and there has been an ongoing program of scheduled maintenance, including an upgrade to carpet and vinyl costing \$14,220, tree removal \$7,000, roof and gutter repairs \$2,300, wall repairs and external painting \$29,800, fixture replacement and repairs to the canteen \$16,500, plus asphalt repairs totalling \$78,600. Sporting facilities were also upgraded at a cost of \$17,000.

Under the Building the Education Revolution, Tamworth West received received \$125,000 for maintenance. The school undertook general repairs to the school facilities, with most of the money spent on floor coverings and painting.

The school also received \$2 million to build a new hall and COLA, and the project is expected to be complete by mid November 2010.

Tamworth West Public School is one of 47 schools across NSW taking part in a pilot of greater autonomy devolved to principals, and that is a very positive development from my perspective. Participating principals are given greater authority over decisions that are otherwise made centrally, including staffing. The pilot is designed to create the best possible conditions for innovation and flexibility at the school level, and aims to drive better results, more confidence from school communities, more effective use of resources, and improved outcomes for students.

In addition to the general operational grant that is provided to all schools, Tamworth West Public School receives further funding under the Priority Schools Funding Program, in recognition of the fact that it serves a socio-economically disadvantaged community. The exact amount received each year depends on enrolments – in 2009/10 - \$29,400 in PSFP funding was provided.

Tamworth West is also receiving funds under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships, a joint funding program between the NSW and Commonwealth Governments that commenced in mid 2009. So far, the school has received \$195,968 to run specialist literacy and numeracy programs, plus a further \$189,025 in initiatives to support students from low SES backgrounds.

This is a fantastic school, delivering great outcomes, and enjoying strong support from the community. It is benefitting significantly from substantial Government investment – as are all of our local schools across the electorate.