



**SPEECH BY KELVIN THOMSON, MHR FOR WILLS
STRATHMORE NORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL
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Thank you for inviting me to the Official Opening of your renovated School Library.

It has long been clear to me that nothing is more important in determining the kind of prospects and chances that all of us get in life than the nature and quality of the education we receive – both our job and career prospects, and also our relationships – how well we deal with family, friends, and as a member of the community. And early learning and Primary Schools are critical—building literary, numeracy and social skills. I'm therefore very pleased that the Federal Government has supported this work on your library through its Investing in Schools Program – to the tune of \$52,400 for the Library, and also with a \$2,700 computer grant.

Your school's Library was officially opened in 1970 by the then Minister for Education. His name was Lindsay Thompson, so us Thomsons have established a bit of a monopoly over your Library openings. I hope someone remembers that when this needs to be done again in another 30 or 40 years time. Back in 1967 the School Committee had written to the Education Department proposing a Library for the School, and in 1968 the school got in the local State MP, Ken Wheeler. He said the Department would subsidise the cost of a Library on a 5 to 4 basis. You have to wonder where some of these arrangements came from!

To raise their side of the finances the parents took out a Co-operative Housing Loan, which showed just how keen they were to ensure their children had access to good educational resources.

I have no doubt that many Strathmore North children have benefited down the years from that commitment and enthusiasm, and I am also in no doubt that the parents and school community today share that same commitment.

The issue of teachers' salaries is very topical at present, and I shouldn't let this occasion pass without saying that I think that, important and all as good facilities are, there is nothin so important in securing a quality education than attracting and retaining quality teachers, and that proper salaries are inevitably necessary to achieve this.

I told my Federal Parliamentary colleagues last year, after we were invited to visit local schools and report back on our findings, that any revolution, even an Education Revolution, needs revolutionaries, and while the commencement salaries for teachers are reasonable, over time they lag behind other professionals and generate real issues regarding retention and teaching quality.

I hope that Federal and State Governments will work together to tackle this issue.

Finally, I'm pleased to say I haven't come empty-handed. Your School Captains Hannah and Emma wrote to me last week seeking new Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders flags, so the school could fly them during Reconciliation Week in May. So I've brought the flags along, and together with CDs of Australia's National Anthem, and books about Australian flags, Australia's national symbols, and Australian fauna and flora emblems, I have great pleasure in presenting them to the school and in officially declaring the renovated Library open.

KELVIN THOMSON MP