

WAKAKIRRI NATIONAL STORY FESTIVAL

Statement

HON LOUISE PRATT (East Metropolitan) [9.46 pm]: I am very delighted this evening to draw attention to a fabulous event that I attended last week, the Wakakirri National Story Festival. It is the primary schools' version of the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge. The cap I am wearing this evening is one that was given to teachers whose schools were participating in the Wakakirri final last week. It is a national competition in which children from around the country engage in storytelling, through both dance and other mediums such as storyboarding and writing. The art of Wakakirri is really about how to tell a story through creativity. The presentations last week at the Perth Concert Hall included some fantastic contributions from schools right around the state. They included St Joseph's School; St Stephen's School, Duncraig; Dryandra Primary School; Millen Primary School; Beechboro Primary School; Koorana Primary School; John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School; Our Lady of Mercy Primary School; Mount Hawthorn Junior Primary School; Middle Swan Primary School; Mt Lawley Primary School; Cloverdale Primary School; Koondoola Primary School; West Leeming Primary School; and Bullsbrook District High School.

I was really pleased that there were some fabulous contributions from schools in the East Metropolitan Region. I wanted to draw attention to the Wakakirri festival because a great deal of effort goes into this event by both the organisers and the sponsors, but most importantly by the school communities and the children who choose to be involved. There is a particular art in telling a story. In telling a great story a school community goes on a journey in which students learn together. There is no better example than the winning primary school this year, which was Koondoola.

Koondoola's story revealed the plight of four refugee children who found themselves living in another society and culture. Indeed, it was a story about Koondoola Primary School and a number of children at the school who came from refugee camps in Africa and are now part of the Koondoola Primary School community. They did a fantastic dramatisation through dance and music of traditional life in Africa, of refugee camps, of fleeing and then arriving in a new school community, of making friends and of what it is to be part of a new school culture and feeling welcome. They conveyed this through a most excellent set of props and costumes, breakdance and a very well artistically integrated story. What was powerful about this dance and story was that one could see the meaning that the school community derived from coming to terms with the relationships that the children have with each other and that the school community has with the multicultural diversity of Koondoola Primary School. That is really at the heart of what Wakakirri is about. It is not what we would narrowly understand to be dance and the noted Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, at which kids come together to do a great dance. It is very much about all the elements of good performance, which is the art of telling a good story and portraying the ideas and values in society that are brought together in telling a good story.

I was very honoured to present the EcoZone award for the use of recycled material in props and costumes. It was terrific that environmental issues also featured strongly in the stories that were told by schools. One terrific story told by a school was about saving the Swan River. Other stories were about recycling and the life of insects. The schools that participated in Wakakirri took us on many engaging journeys.

I extend my sincere thanks to the school communities and parents who allowed their children to participate in Wakakirri this year. It is not a small undertaking; it is a huge undertaking for each school that chooses to participate. The end product is quite profound and a wonderful thing for each child, family and school community that participates. I strongly recommend that Western Australian companies and government agencies sponsor Wakakirri because it is a worthwhile event. To those schools that get tired of making a commitment to participate in this event, I remind them what a worthwhile event it is - let the kids have a go.