

# 'Wrong message' on education

15 Sep 09 @ 08:27am by JOANNE VELLA



Cr Linda Eisler

A REQUEST for a Riverwood private school to receive \$2000 funding from Canterbury Council to help disadvantaged children sparked a public versus private education debate last week.

The council last week approved \$1000 funding for St Joseph's Primary at Riverwood following the request to help children at the Thurlow St Catholic school.

Former public school teacher Cr Linda Eisler, who objected to the application, said approving the bursary sent the wrong message to the community.

"Any disadvantaged youth could get a good education in the public system," she said.

"I've spent my life in the public education system."

Mayor Robert Furolo, who sends his two children to a public primary school, said the grant would directly assist students, not just the school.

"Like Cr Eisler, I'm a strong advocate for public education and we'd never want to take away from the role of public education ... ," he said.

"While I'm a strong advocate of public education, I'm equally strong of the right of people to have a choice of where they send their kids.

"This money is going to families who would like assistance for their children's education.

“I don’t think it’s totally unreasonable that we’ll be assisting.”

“ - “Cr Eisler said the council report failed to say whether the money was going directly to students or to the school.

Cr Mark Adler blasted Cr Eisler. “Cr Eisler has drawn out the longest of longest bows on her views on public education,” he said.

St Joseph’s principal Jennifer Kratz said she was unaware of the application when contacted by the Express last week.

“I can’t offer comment because I’m not aware of it,” she said.

Cr Furolo said local charity group Riverwood Hybernian Society member Vince Breen, whose voluntary fundraising has spanned 30 years, had applied for the funding.

“This 81-year-old is the sweetest man you could ever meet,’ he said.