



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 10 November 1998

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: Twice this year I have tabled reports prepared by the School Curriculum Council on literacy and numeracy in Queensland. These reports identified dramatic differences between the performance of boys and girls in respect of literacy and numeracy.

Honourable members may recall that I said I would return to the House with a Government response to this critical situation. I now table a report: Future Directions for School Based Management in Queensland State Schools. This report includes details of a \$28m initiative aimed primarily at improving literacy among our young Queenslanders. We can now provide much more help for young Queenslanders who struggle with reading and writing. Most of this \$28m will be used to generate thousands of teacher aide hours across Queensland, specifically to target literacy improvement. Teacher aides provide valuable one-to-one assistance with children in that vital stage when they are learning to read.

Importantly, this initiative goes further and provides funds in other areas which have been identified by school communities as pressure points. As a result, there are funds for deputy primary principals, who will have a role in curriculum leadership, and there are also funds set aside for schools needing extra grounds care and administrative officer support. In total, the new funding arrangements will support the employment of 675 full-time equivalent positions.

Further, the report details new funding arrangements for every school in Queensland. Unlike the old elitist Leading Schools program, which led schools up the garden path, these new arrangements are both fair and equitable and do not favour one school over another. I would urge members to look closely at the new funding arrangements so they can see that Leading Schools is dead. These grants do not rely on schools tying themselves to a particular method of school-based management. Now, schools across Queensland will get a grant based on their enrolments, and subject to change as a result of those enrolments. Grants will also recognise any special needs a school has.

Finally, also included in this report are details of three options of school-based management which are being proposed by Education Queensland. This is the result of consultations with parents and teachers. Fifteen groups of stakeholders were involved in the process, with 1,140 people participating in focus groups and over 8,000 different members of school communities responding to a survey. I say quite clearly that the Government will not force any school to accept any style of school-based management that they do not want. At this stage, these three options are departmental recommendations only. I will inform the House when consultations on these proposals have been concluded and the Government's subsequent policy decisions have been made on these matters.
