



Speech by

Mrs J. SHELDON

MEMBER FOR CALOUNDRA

Hansard 26 August 1998

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

Mrs SHELDON (Caloundra—LP) (6.10 p.m.): I rise to second the motion moved by the honourable member for Merrimac. It certainly has not taken long for this Government to show its true colours. The new Education Minister is just a month or two into the job and he already wants to renege on his own department's legally binding funding commitments under its enterprise bargaining agreement. This is a Minister who is promising to fund all sorts of wonderful new initiatives in next month's Budget but who claims he does not have the money to meet existing obligations. Is it any wonder that Labor has so much trouble balancing the books when this is how it runs its biggest department?

Mr WELLS: The honourable member is misleading the House. I never made any such claim.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mrs SHELDON: If the Minister does renege on his department's commitments, he will betray the trust and goodwill of more than 400 school communities throughout Queensland. This issue is of particular concern to the Sunshine Coast. Almost 66% of the 61,600 State school students on the north coast attend phase 1 and phase 2 Leading Schools. That is more than 40,000 students who can expect their schools to lose thousands of dollars in special grants because the Minister wants to renege on his own department's funding commitments. We estimate that in the next semester alone those 53 Phase 1 and 2 Leading Schools on the Sunshine Coast will lose about \$400,000. The full year's impact will be significantly worse again.

The situation in my own seat of Caloundra is particularly alarming. We have five Leading Schools—Bokarina State School, Caloundra State School, Caloundra State High School, Golden Beach State School and Talara Primary College. Between them, they account for 65 per cent of all State school students in my electorate. Bokarina has about 700 students, Caloundra has 660, Caloundra High has approximately 1,500, Golden Beach has 670 and Talara has 320. That is more than 3,800 of the 5,800 State school students in my electorate. That means that two out of every three State school students in Caloundra will be worse off because the Minister wants to welsh on a done deal. And that is just next semester. Almost every State school student in Queensland and every State school student on the coast will be worse off within this term of Government because every one of our 1,300 State schools would have been eligible to join the program within the next few years.

There are no real winners out of this Minister's proposal—not in the medium term and not in the long term and, for most students, certainly not in the short term. That is why this House cannot allow the Minister to get away with his silly pea and thimble trick.

That brings me to the Independent member for Nicklin, who may very well play a determining role in these proceedings tonight. The seat of Nicklin has eight Leading Schools, which account for 65% of State school enrolments in his electorate. Beerwah State School has about 490 students, Beerwah State High School has 1,060, Burnside State High School has 920, Glasshouse Mountains State School has 460, Maleny State School has 610, Maleny State High School has 510, Nambour State High School has 1,290 and Woodford State School has 570. That is about 5,900 students, or two-thirds, of the 9,100 enrolments at all State schools within the member's electorate. In other words, two

out of every three State school students in the seat of Nicklin will be worse off next semester if the Independent member votes with the Government on this motion.

Nearly every State school student will be worse off during this term of Government, and in making his decision tonight the member for Nicklin should reflect on the fact that each of those 9,000 students has parents, who will no doubt cast their votes again in a few years' time. If the member for Nicklin allows this Government to renege on its formal funding commitments, he will have to justify that decision from now until the next election. Every time the Minister sends out his special grants to schools, we will be telling the people of Queensland and the voters of Nicklin how much they have been short changed. This issue will not go away. The member for Nicklin should also remember that funding is certainly not the only "guarantee" under threat.

If the Government gains the support of the member for Nicklin tonight, it will also be able to water down the many other school-based management provisions contained in Education Queensland's current enterprise bargaining agreement. Those provisions give guarantees on a whole raft of important issues such as class sizes, staffing, budgets, resourcing, specialist services and employee transfers. It took months of intense negotiations to finalise these guarantees and they were supported by 88% of teachers in last year's Statewide ballot, including thousands of teachers on the Sunshine Coast. I think those teachers would take a very dim view of any member who failed to protect their interests and the interests of their schools.

Time expired.
