



Speech by

**Mr J. HEGARTY**

**MEMBER FOR REDLANDS**

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Hansard 26 August 1998

### **SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT**

**Mr HEGARTY** (Redlands—NPA) (6.45 p.m.): I rise to speak in this debate this evening not primarily because of my support for school-based management but because of my belief that parents, teachers and community members have a right to participate in the formal strategic planning and decision-making process of their own schools. In Government, the coalition felt very strongly about this principle and I am pleased to say that it went so far as to develop policies which protected the right of parents, teachers and community members to have such involvement. Unfortunately, Labor wants to put all of this in jeopardy.

In its education policy released for the last State election Labor said it would ensure that the establishment of school councils was voluntary. In itself, that was a fairly innocuous statement. Real concern, however, arises when we look at the basis behind this policy. The Queensland Teachers Union has never supported the operation of school councils. The union totally opposes the prospect of allowing its members to join with parents and have a legitimate say in the management of a school. The union would prefer to have a system of school advisory councils. Such councils would be toothless tigers, without even so much as the real power to influence school policies.

Union pressure is the basis for Labor Party policy. Since taking office, the Minister has demonstrated two things: firstly, that he is a bumbling incompetent; and, secondly, that he is nothing more than a puppet for the union. If the Government were to follow the true intentions of the union's policy of school-based management, no school would have a school council. It is quite simple. The union, using the influence of its organisers, would ensure that any plan to establish a school council was vetoed.

No teacher, no parent and no other member of a school community would therefore have the right to participate in legitimate school-based decision making. The union is scared of school-based management. It is scared of the fact that the devolution of power from central office to local school communities would diminish its power. Who knows, maybe union officials would be forced to get out of their ivory towers and start listening to the needs of their members.

Some union members may even find that they are better off without the union; that they have been able to achieve more through their school council than the union has ever achieved through centralised negotiation and industrial militancy.

There are a number of members in this Parliament who support the concept of a citizens initiated referendum. Proponents of CIR argue that people should have a greater right to influence decision-making processes. School councils are a mechanism for providing ordinary members of the public with an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes where it really matters—their own backyard. It would be a great shame if this Government does not proactively support the establishment of school councils and if it does not act to prevent the union from having the power to veto the establishment of these councils.

I support this motion because I support the right of parents, teachers and community members to participate in the formal strategic planning and decision-making processes of their own schools. This is a fundamental principle of school-based management. The Minister needs to learn how to stand up to the union in the interests of Queensland students. If the Minister and the Government do not support this motion they will be undermining the quality of education in Queensland State schools.

They alone will have to explain why parents, teachers and community members are going to be locked out of the fairest and most transparent way of providing a good education for our students.

I would like to correct some of the statements made by previous speakers in relation to the amount of funding that is going to be provided over the three years. The Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources said that \$15m would be provided. In fact the amount was \$40m and it was locked in. The other furphy that has been perpetrated is that schools in the electorates of coalition members would be advantaged. That is not correct, either. I have nine State schools in my electorate of Redlands and only one school went into round 1 of the Leading Schools program and four went into round 2. That leaves four schools which are still not in the Leading Schools program. I do not believe that that is a case of pandering to coalition members. Two of the schools that would have been eligible were really not suitable at that point for various reasons. The criteria for entering into rounds 1 and 2 were fairly well established. A lot of schools could have gone into it, but they did not meet some of the criteria at that point. However, this did not detract from the fact that they were schools which were capable of being considered as Leading Schools, but not at that point. I commend the motion to the House.

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