



Speech by

Hon. R. WELFORD

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

Hansard 26 August 1998

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

Hon. R. J. WELFORD (Everton—ALP) (Minister for Environment and Heritage and Minister for Natural Resources) (6.30 p.m.): The former Minister's problem is simply this: he does not recognise equity, and that is the shortcoming of all members of the Opposition who are opposed to the amendment to the motion moved by the member for Gladstone.

The problem with the former Minister is threefold. Firstly, he does not recognise equity; the system he introduced never did. Secondly, he is a living monument to agency capture. Those of us who have been around for a few years would all know that this inequitable system of distribution of Leading Schools funds which, in his motion tonight, he tried to lock in was driven by the bureaucracy even before the coalition came to Government. We resisted it and now we are going to set it right. We are not going to be captured by the agencies of the Education Department bureaucrats, because we believe in equity. We believe in a fair system.

The third shortcoming of the former Minister, Mr Quinn, is that he cannot help but try to be a dictator. That is what his motion tonight tries to do: lock up the Parliament and preclude future Governments, including this one, from the option of actually varying the system even with the consent of all parties—even with the consent of teachers, school communities and the parents involved. He wants to lock in the very system which captured him and which delivered so much inequity to so many schools throughout the State.

My electorate was a prime example. Two out of three schools in Albany Creek, for example, were delivered so-called Leading School status while the very one that had been in the process right from the very first meeting at that luxury hotel somewhere down the Gold Coast or up the Sunshine Coast—wherever the first meeting was held to try to sell this flawed idea—missed out. It was one of the schools that was eligible, not to mention the smaller schools in my electorate, such as Everton Park State School, which never even got onto the starting grid. That school never even had a chance. It never had a chance to get Leading Schools money or any of the special programs, such as the Lighthouse Professional Development Project that was available only to the first round of so-called Leading Schools. Even the very title of the concept was designed to deceive school communities because it was a simple and cynical marketing ploy to present this program as something that actually made schools better.

The reality was that it loaded responsibilities onto the schools far faster than the funding was being delivered to meet those responsibilities. Most school communities that felt pressured into accepting that money have since discovered that that reality has been driven home to them. It was fundamentally unfair and the former Government fundamentally failed to deliver the promise which all of the marketing hype said it would deliver. Leading Schools significantly increased resources to some schools at the expense of others, especially smaller schools such as those in my electorate and a number of rural schools.

I was amused to hear the member for Caloundra attempting to browbeat the member for Nicklin and lecture him on what would happen in his schools. This is an interesting scenario. Not so long ago the Premier was in here telling the Parliament how we needed to accept the outcome of the election and respect the views of Independents. But then we have the former Deputy Premier getting up in this

debate and lecturing the member for Nicklin about how they would deliver messages to his schools—about some dire consequence that he was delivering to them.

The member for Nicklin is likely to understand better than the member for Caloundra that he is on about getting fairness for his schools in a way that the member for Caloundra has never recognised. He is on about getting a fair distribution of resources that lifts all his schools together over a period of time up to a standard that they deserve without picking and choosing particular schools at the expense of others. In this instance, the member for Nicklin shares with us and the member for Gladstone the respect that we need to accord to parents and school communities the opportunity to be flexible about the administrative arrangements that they want to choose and not railroad them into some bureaucratically driven, flawed agenda that restricts them to specific administrative structures on the basis that they take bribes in the form of additional, short-term and, for the most part, one-off funding grants. That was a pathetic system. The only reason certain members of the Opposition want to cling to it is that they delivered to their own electorates—they delivered to their own schools—a benefit that they were not prepared to deliver to any of the others. The member for Caloundra is very probably in precisely that position.

Time expired.
