



Speech by

Mr T. SULLIVAN

MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE

Hansard 26 August 1998

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT

Mr SULLIVAN (ChermSIDE—ALP) (6.40 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Gladstone. Certain inequities were introduced through the Leading Schools program which are unacceptable to this Government and to the community at large. Such inequities were manifested through the way State schools were funded by the Government and by the enhanced so-called status that they were able to promote in the community. In short, Leading Schools received greater financial support and were given the means to develop a more prominent social status than other State schools. I remember reading the Mackay Mercury when the Mirani State High School joined the program. The newspaper said that the school had joined the "elite" group of State schools. The implication was that all the other schools in the Mirani electorate were not up to standard and were second class. Let us look at the name itself. If some schools were Leading Schools, what were the others— following schools, trailing schools, plebeian schools? Whatever they were, they were not the top schools; they were second-class schools.

Some schools were displaying signs and advertising that, "This is a Leading School". These words appeared in their newsletters and on their front noticeboards. It is unacceptable for a publicly funded State school system to be providing means whereby wealthier schools or better funded schools are advantaged over the less wealthy schools.

Some school funding beyond the normal Treasury allocation was made available only to schools that were Leading Schools. These included a permanent—that is recurrent— increase to the school grant of \$30,000 plus \$11 per student up to a maximum of \$50,000. There was an additional, once-only, grant of \$30,000 plus \$11 per student up to a maximum of \$50,000. This was called the implementation and innovation grant and was available only to Phase 1 Leading Schools. Many other parents saw it as a bribe. This was the bribe to get them in and, once in, a school was locked into the system and the other schools missed out.

Leading Schools were the only ones eligible to seek special grants under some other departmental initiatives. Only 104 Phase 1 Leading Schools were able to apply for the Lighthouse Professional Development grants. Eighteen of the 104 Leading Schools had already received funding from a total amount of 824,000. I ask the member for Tablelands, and others who have spoken in support of this system: how can they say that 104 schools only should have access to more than three-quarters of a million dollars while the other 1,100 or 1,200 schools throughout Queensland do not have access to that money? For the information of members I table a list of the schools that have access to \$824,012.

Mr Seeney: They probably need it.

Mr SULLIVAN: The member for Callide says that they may need it. I agree. Those schools may need extra funding, but what about the other 1,200 schools? Would they not also be deserving? What are the criteria under which those schools can have access to more than three-quarters of a million dollars? Is it because of the fact that they accepted the one-off bribe or the fact that there were needs in the school? That is where the unfairness and the inequity lies.

The Government's commitment to the total allocation of discretionary grants for schools through the EBA will not be reduced; however, it will be distributed more equitably. Departmental figures show that an estimated \$15.263m during 1998-99 and \$23.050m during 1999-2000 is available in

discretionary grants. These total funds will stay as a binding commitment. That puts the lie to people such as the member for Maroochydore who say that we are gutting the system. The funds are staying the same. What is changing is the manner in which the funds are distributed. It will be fairer.

The Leading Schools form of school-based management placed an expectation on communities to take more responsibility for supporting the funding of schools. Some schools are more able than others to do so. In his area the member for Nicklin had three Phase 1 Leading Schools at 15%, five Phase 2 Leading Schools at 25% and 12 Phase 3 Leading Schools at 60%. These were not Leading Schools. In my own area Craigslea State School received funding but Craigslea State High School did not. Wavell State High School received funding but Wavell State School did not. Where is the equity in that?

When the member for Merrimac was Minister he could not explain that. Why should students in one school receive funding whereas children across the fence at a State high school would not? What made it fair for someone in Year 7 to receive funding but for someone in Year 8 not to receive funding? Why should the students at Somerset Hills, Stafford Heights and Virginia State Schools receive nothing while students in another State school less than a kilometre away received funding?

Time expired.
