



Speech by

**Mr T. SULLIVAN**

**MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE**

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Hansard 18 November 1998

**MINISTER FOR EDUCATION**

**Mr SULLIVAN** (ChermSIDE—ALP) (6.13 p.m.): The present Minister for Education, the Honourable Dean Wells, should enjoy the full confidence of this House. It is disappointing to see that, in the past few weeks, every concern or argument raised by Opposition members in relation to the education sphere have related to problems that they did not address and could not solve while they were in Government. They have discussed the capping of school numbers, which they knew were a problem and refused to address. They have criticised decisions that have been made in relation to school-based management, the applications for new schools, maintenance needs and literacy and numeracy inequalities. Yet, when in Government, the member for Merrimac, Mr Quinn, did not attend to those problems. He refused to face up to the realities. He ran away like the former Minister for Health did from the issues that were too hard. He put them in the too-hard basket. Now he says that Labor should attend to these matters. That is the sort of hypocrisy that we have come to expect from the member for Toowoomba South. I am sad to see that it is coming from the member for Merrimac.

A clear example of why this House should have confidence in the current Minister is evident in the decisive action taken by him to eliminate a major betrayal perpetrated on the Queensland State school system by the previous Minister, Mr Quinn. The previous Minister's betrayal was most clearly manifest in his system of Leading Schools, in which he introduced an inequitable and elitist system of resource redistribution that favoured the select few over the rest. The Leading Schools system divided the school education community in Queensland into the haves and the have-nots. It set school against school in a competitive rather than a collaborative environment, and then gave the select few a massive advantage over the others. Is it any wonder that the first major decision made by the present Minister for Education was to disband that elitist, unfair and un-Queensland system established by his predecessor? That decision has the support of the vast majority of Queensland parents.

In disbanding the Leading Schools program, the present Minister for Education took two major steps. In Semester 2 this year, he provided additional funding for schools and shared those additional funds among all band 8-11 schools, not just the small number of Leading Schools. He then ordered that work begin immediately to determine how funding may be distributed more fairly among all Queensland schools. He involved teachers, parents and the Department of Education in that decision. The current Minister for Education has, from the very beginning, been working for the majority of Queensland State schools, not the few so blatantly favoured by the previous Minister.

How did the previous Minister favour the select few? We need to go no further than considering the very special privileges enjoyed by schools in Phase 1 of the Leading Schools program. In the short time that Leading Schools was in place, those Phase 1 schools moved far ahead of other schools, as the following list of privileges will show. Phase 1 Leading Schools received a one-off incentive to join the program of \$30,000 plus \$11 per student. Phase 1 Leading Schools received an increased school grant consisting of \$30,000 per annum plus \$11 per student to a maximum of \$50,000. That double whammy alone has put the select few schools well ahead of all other schools to the extent that it is perhaps doubtful that the other schools will ever catch up. Phase 1 Leading Schools had local area computer networks installed at a total cost of \$10m, averaging \$96,000 per school. However, the model used to equip those Phase 1 Leading Schools was so expensive that it will never be able to be introduced in all schools throughout Queensland. Phase 1 Leading Schools were the only schools eligible to apply for over \$824,000 in funding allocated for the purpose of establishing the lighthouse IT

schools. Phase 1 Leading Schools received preference when connecting schools to the department's electronic network. Phase 1 Leading Schools received preference when allocating facilities funds and were always at the top of the queue when it came to getting things fixed. For example, the department allocated \$1.6m to Leading Schools for minor works in a period when no money was given to other schools. Most Phase 1 Leading Schools received \$2,000 for personal professional development of senior administrators. Phase 1 Leading School principals received \$1,000 for personal professional development and a 5% pay increase on joining the program.

The many school communities that were not allowed to participate in that discriminatory carve-up of scarce resources were effectively made second-class citizens in the Queensland school system. The members opposite, particularly the members from the regional and remote areas, recognise that many of the schools in their areas are smaller schools that were not eligible for one cent of that money. The majority of schools in those regional and remote areas were not eligible for one cent. Of course, the Gold Coast has a high population. The member for Merrimac made sure that the large schools in his area were allocated funds as Phase 1 Leading Schools. The current Minister's approach is much more equitable.

With regard to the Kimberley College application, the current Minister has processed the application using the committee and the principles established by the former Minister.

Time expired.

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