



Speech by

**Mr R. QUINN**

**MEMBER FOR MERRIMAC**

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Hansard 9 June 1999

### **MAGNIFICAT MEAL MOVEMENT**

**Mr QUINN** (Merrimac—LP) (Deputy Leader of the Liberal Party) (10.18 a.m.): I refer this House to growing concerns about the appropriateness of allowing the Magnificat Meal Movement to teach religious instructions in our schools. Let me make it clear that I am not in a position to judge whether this movement is a bona fide religious organisation or otherwise; nor, I suspect, is the Minister. That is the issue. The Minister has a duty of care to have this situation thoroughly investigated to ensure that children's interests are protected.

The coalition is not alone in this view. Local parents are concerned, the local priest is concerned, the local bishop is concerned, former members of the movement are concerned and so are various others. The Minister should be concerned as well, but apparently he is not. What harm could it do to conduct a proper investigation of the concerns raised by the Helidon and Flagstone Creek communities? If the movement was found to be a bona fide religious organisation, beneficial to students, that would be the end of the matter. On the other hand, if there is a problem and existing legislation does not cover the situation, it is up to the Minister to fix it.

No law is immutable. We refine laws every day in this House as circumstances require. Contrary to what the Minister claims, this is not about conducting an inquisition; it is about commonsense and taking responsibility. The Minister has a legal and moral duty of care to the children in our schools and it is about time that he started to exercise it.

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