



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 27 April 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Enrolment Benchmark Agreement

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.53 a.m.), by leave: The Commonwealth has slashed by \$3.5m the amount of money allocated to the Queensland State school system. This is a cut disguised as a reallocation. The total number of students in the State school system has increased from 435,238 in 1997—

Mr Borbidge interjected.

Mr WELLS: Absolutely, but it is a separate issue. This is the enrolment benchmark adjustment. The Leader of the Opposition should remember those words.

The total number of students in the State school system has increased from 435,238 in 1997 to 441,009 in 1998. However, while the total number of students in the State school system has increased over the period, the proportion in the State school system as against the private system has declined by a fraction of a per cent. The Commonwealth Government has responded by taking money from the State school system and giving it to the private school system, but it has not allowed for population increases in either system. It has used a fractional decline in the State school system's proportion of enrolments as a spurious excuse to claw back funds from the State school system—without regard to the increase in student numbers, without regard to the needs of the students and without regard to justice or equity.

This funding cut of \$3.5m has been disguised as a reallocation through the enrolment benchmark agreement, which was introduced in the 1996 Federal Budget. The application of this benchmark saw Queensland lose some \$2.6m in 1997. This application of the benchmark for 1998 will now cost Queensland another \$3.5m. The loss of these much-needed funds by the continued application of the Federal Government's enrolment benchmark agreement will lead to enormous pressure on the State sector, which provides high-cost service obligations to remote and rural areas.

It is vitally important as we continue into the next century to maintain a flourishing State school system in Queensland. This decision by the Commonwealth yet again shows the contempt of the Federal Government for ordinary Queenslanders.
