



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 26 August 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Centenary of Federation

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.03 a.m.), by leave: In just a few weeks Queensland will be celebrating an historic occasion. On 2 September 1899, Queenslanders voted to join the Federation. One hundred years later, too few Australians know that Edmund Barton was our first Prime Minister. But those of our children who do not know this will know it before the centenary celebrations are over.

The Federation which effected Australia's nationhood was not forged in a cauldron of blood, as was the nationhood of those countries which celebrate their nationhood most fiercely. Australia's nationhood was achieved without the sacrifice of a single life. It was not won by a call to arms but by a recourse to intelligence. Our history is what history would have been everywhere if the world had been less imperfect. This makes our history more worth studying than, say, the French, American or Russian revolutions. And it will be studied in every State school, in every classroom, next year. My department is currently working on plans to ensure that next year every child receives some familiarity with the history of our birth as a nation.

Today I would urge all members of this House to join the events being organised to reignite interest in our past. All school communities have been invited to apply for grants from the \$10.2m Centenary of Federation Queensland Community Assistance Program. The program—an initiative of the Queensland Government—encourages communities across the State to develop projects of lasting value in tribute to the Centenary of Federation. Communities may apply for funding from \$5,000 to \$100,000 for projects which either create employment, maximise community awareness of Federation, celebrate Australia's achievements since Federation, or enhance a sense of nationhood.

Mr Borbridge: Have you got Councillor Pisasale's phone number?

Mr WELLS: I think honourable members opposite were trying to say something of national significance, but they obviously cannot remember what it was.

Many people already have ideas which meet these criteria. The program will favour projects which have well-developed links with their region or community. In both urban and rural areas, schools are at the centre of almost every community activity and local tradition. This is significant funding for worthwhile projects, and I am sure honourable members on both sides of the House are looking forward to seeing our schools take part. Applications for round two grants close on Friday, 29 October 1999.
