



Speech by

**Hon. D. WELLS**

**MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA**

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Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL**  
**Estimates Committee F**  
**Report**

**Hon. D. M. WELLS** (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (12.58 p.m.): I thank honourable members for their participation in the debate. The Education budget is one which will generate a sea change in education in this State. The first six months of our term of office were involved with dealing with the leftovers of the previous Government. The Leading Schools program had to be abolished. The question of school-based management had to be put behind us. Now we are in a position to move on.

The background against which we will be moving into an era when educational issues rather than management issues will be the key questions that exercise us is the 2010 Consultation, which will yield a 2010 strategy—a strategy that will enable the people of Queensland to look forward for a whole decade to the kinds of outcomes that we hope for for our children at the end of the first decade of the 21st century. What kind of skills, what kind of understandings and what kind of socialisation to the world do we want our children to have as they face the work force and the society of the second decade of the 21st century?

These are key questions relating to education. Many initiatives in this Budget relate to the perspectives which we derive from the 2010 consultation. One of these is the virtual school, of which I have spoken to honourable members very recently. The virtual school is a real school. A real teacher in a real classroom in real time responds to real students, but the students may be dispersed throughout the entire State. The consequence of this is that the tyranny of distance, which has for so long been an impediment, particularly to our smaller rural and isolated schools, is going to be, over a period of several years, obviated. Instead of the situation where children who have a particular interest in a particular subject are unable to pursue that interest further by virtue of the fact that there are not enough students in that particular school to constitute an entire classroom, they will be able to lock into the Internet and take part in the virtual school. This will be of benefit to students in the city, as well.

There are multiple instances of students who have a particular interest in a particular subject and who are unable to pursue that interest by virtue of the fact that there are not enough students in that school to constitute a class. This will enable students to play to their strengths, and that is what education is all about. The most successful academic outcomes are always achieved by students who play to those strengths—to the subjects that they are best at or in which they have a proven record of interest.

Sitting suspended from 1.02 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

**Mr WELLS:** I was referring to some of the new initiatives of the Education budget. I mentioned the virtual schools pilot. I should also mention the Strategic Initiatives Fund, which is encouraging the spread of particular excellent initiatives in the education sector.

In the brief time remaining, I wish to refer to some of the issues that were raised by honourable members on the other side of the House in the reservations document. One of those involved a series of subtractions which suggested that the increases in the budget would do little more than cover the escalation due to increased enrolments.

The situation is that the massive recurrent expenditure increases which were a feature of last year's budget are all preserved in this budget, so they will continue. The \$35m Education For All

initiatives, based over four years, the increase of \$5m in behaviour management funding, and the increases in a whole range of areas are a feature of this Government. Also remaining is the \$17m increase in the area of literacy and numeracy. The other proposition put by the reservations document included the structural changes—

Time expired.