Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
Bible Studies in State Schools

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.38 a.m.), by leave: I confirm that there is no proposal to ban Bible studies in Queensland State schools. No such proposal has come near my desk. No such proposal is known to anyone in my department who has the capacity to forward such proposals to me. Nothing whatsoever is changing with respect to the long-established right of religious denominations to enter Queensland State schools for the purposes of providing religious instruction to children from families of that denomination. Nothing whatsoever is changing with respect to the right of communities to appoint chaplains. The Board of Secondary School Studies offers a subject called the Study of Religion. Nothing whatsoever is changing with respect to that.

Members may be interested to know that there is a Religious Education Advisory Committee, which has existed in the Education Department for 25 years. It has 19 representatives of Christian denominations, as well as representatives of other faiths. It has expressed a view, I understand, that it would be desirable to have a textbook which could be used by teachers during religious education classes. I understand that their idea is that, when a teacher was doing a Bible reading, in most cases with the majority of the class, if there was a child from an Islamic or a Confucian background, that child could be given suitable reading material from the Koran or from the works of Confucius. There is, however, absolutely nothing whatsoever new in this idea.

As I understand it, that proposal has reached the desk of a public servant, who has not yet thought about it to the extent of making a recommendation about it one way or the other. However, since this is a proposal which comes from a committee in which representatives of Christian religions are predominant, I doubt that any honourable member would have any difficulties with it.

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