



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 25 November 1999

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Cooler Schools Program

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: Recent studies have confirmed that the learning experiences of our children are more effective if they are undertaken in a comfortable environment, particularly one that is not too hot. That is why we introduced the Cooler Schools program, which greatly increased the area to be airconditioned, bringing it south of the Tropic of Capricorn and increasing the subsidy to four to one. New schools in the zone are built with airconditioning fitted.

The Beattie Labor Government is spending \$109.8m on airconditioning State schools in the expanded Cooler Schools zone. There are some 400 State schools in the total Cooler Schools zone. Work has been undertaken at a substantial proportion of these. My department advises me that, prior to this year, we completed airconditioning in at least 139 resource centres. More than 71 schools which had applied for subsidy had had their work completed. We have carried out electrical upgrades and passive cooling measures at 197 schools.

Our current program of work is going to complete airconditioning at a further 44 resource centres. There are another 130 schools undertaking airconditioning subsidy work and electrical upgrades will be done in conjunction with that work. Our forward program to be executed in the coming year will see an estimated further 50 resource centres airconditioned and 91 approved airconditioning subsidy projects undertaken. It is anticipated that two-thirds of those schools will require electrical upgrades and we would anticipate undertaking passive cooling measures in at least some 90 schools as well.

Education Queensland has worked closely with Professor Dick Aynsley from James Cook University's Institute of Tropical Architecture, who is a world expert on thermal comfort in tropical climates. The performance standards that the department has established for the Cooler Schools program have been based on research and recommendations that Professor Aynsley undertook for the department. He worked with other academics, including those in the Architecture Department at the University of Queensland.

Expenditure to the beginning of this financial year was \$49.15m, of which \$42.75m was in State schools. The budget for the current year is \$27.3m, of which \$24.5m is in State schools. The Cooler Schools program is not just about enhancing the comfort of our students and of the staff; it is all about getting better learning outcomes. The enormous expansion of airconditioning, which the Cooler Schools program represents, also represents an expansion in learning opportunities.
