



Speech by
Mr TERRY SULLIVAN
MEMBER FOR CHERMSIDE

Hansard 28 October 1999

APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee F
Report

Mr SULLIVAN (ChermSIDE—ALP) (2.56 p.m.): I rise to support the Estimates committee report and to congratulate in particular the Education Minister on the work that he and his department have done in this area. Education is so important, because it deals with the future of our children and the future of our country. If one wanted to talk strictly in financial terms, then one only has to look at South-East Asia, Ireland and other countries where the Government's investment in education led to a return of great economic benefit for those countries. The countries that have not given the highest priority to their education system have wallowed in old systems, in old methods of running the economy and have floundered. So whether one takes the altruistic or the practical approach, one realises that education is essential and must be given the highest priority.

This Beattie Government's \$3.9 billion allocation to the education system in Queensland illustrates its commitment to making Queensland the Smart State. Of course, the basics must be addressed for all of our young children coming into the classrooms, and that is basic literacy and numeracy. Although some of the preschool programs and the home education methods have made some children much more ready to fit into the formal structure of Year 1, a significant number of people still come through the formal schooling process with difficulties in literacy and numeracy. Programs such as the Reading Recovery Program have resulted in great benefits for a certain number of students. Although the cost in terms of teacher allocation and in resources can be relatively high, it is a cost that this community has to bear because, without basic literacy and numeracy, we are not giving our children the chance to progress in the best possible way.

There are great challenges facing the Minister. Some of them involve behaviour management problems. Because of changes in our society, we have well and truly gone away from the old adage "children are to be seen and not heard". In so many ways, our society is saying, "We recognise children; we recognise that they are to have their say; we recognise that, in the past, some of the practices that were imposed on children"—and I use that word "imposed" advisedly—"are simply not appropriate to today's society." That can lead to significant challenges in behaviour management within the classroom.

Another factor is the higher retention rates for Year 12 students. Previously, young adults who were not coping well with school or who did not find school to their liking could leave and get a basic job or an apprenticeship. They could face the realities of the work force.

Mr Welford interjected.

Mr SULLIVAN: I notice that the member for Everton is agreeing with my comments about the education system, and that is excellent. Higher retention rates have meant that a number of students stay in upper secondary classes, even though they really do not want to be there. Sometimes they show their resentment through their behaviour. This can cause very significant problems for the rest of the class and the teacher. I encourage the Minister to continue the grants that his department provides to behaviour management programs.

The Education for All program, which provides for students with disabilities or learning difficulties, is well received by teachers. There can be problems with having students with severe learning difficulties in normal classrooms if a lot of time has to be given to one or two students, which means that other students can miss out on receiving extra help. That is a growing challenge and we will have to face it, no matter which side of politics is in Government.

I give my strong support to the Minister for his initiatives to improve teacher housing. The Federal Government's fringe benefits tax has hit hard. We have to pay about \$8m under that FBT, which is a cost that we should not have to bear for what we have to deal with. I encourage the Minister to continue with his good work.
