



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 30 May 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Teachers

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (10.08 a.m.), by leave: The State Government has been engaged in negotiations with the Queensland Teachers Union for some time. Let me be clear on several points. Firstly, the Government appreciates and respects the work of our teachers. They deliver a crucial service to our most important asset. So we have made a without prejudice offer to the teachers—a 3% increase for all Queensland teachers to be paid from 1 June. This is money payable in addition to any prospective increase determined by the Full Bench whenever it meets—perhaps in October or November. The offer is made in good faith. The arbitration process can be drawn out and lengthy. There is no guarantee that the issue will be determined this year. Historically, backdating by the commission is unlikely. On 6 June, Queensland teachers will have the chance to vote on future actions. I am keen for teachers to express their views. I will ensure that they will not lose any pay for their attendance at the one hour stop-work meeting. I want all teachers to attend.

It is important that Queensland teachers and the Queensland taxpayer understand clearly the Government offer. We are saying that 3% will be paid for the period before the issue is decided in arbitration. What we have on the table is a 9% offer that would mean senior teachers would earn \$54,600 by the end of the third year. That is an increase of about \$1,500 a year, or \$4,500 over three years. A first-year teacher would earn \$37,200. That is an increase of about \$1,020 a year, or \$3,060 over three years. Those in bands 4 to 7—that is, principals and associate administrators—are being offered 5% in the first year, then 3% each year for the following two years. This amounts to an 11% rise over three years.

The final increase will be determined in the Industrial Commission, and we will be bound by its determinations. The Queensland Teachers Union has asked for a 24% pay rise over three years—something that taxpayers simply cannot afford. New South Wales teachers have just received a 16% increase over four and a half years. That comes to an annual 3.55%—that is, 0.55% more than the Queensland offer, which we are proposing to pay ahead of arbitration.

When the teachers vote on 6 June I would ask them to consider what New South Wales teachers sacrificed for that extra 0.55%. They have agreed to annual performance reviews, not only of their classroom performance but also of lesson plans. The result of the review determines whether their salary increase is frozen. They have agreed to timetabled classes from 7.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. for Years 11 and 12. They have agreed to teaching at multiple sites and to no further industrial action on terms and conditions until after 2003. We are not asking Queensland teachers for any of this. We are asking for nothing additional to what they are already doing.

Our children's education is far too important to be disrupted by industrial action. All we are saying is that we are willing to pay 3% as of 1 June as a sign of good faith while the issue is argued before the industrial commission. We can deliver the 3% as of 1 June. We can put money into teachers' pockets as of 1 June. All we request in return is that they teach our children without industrial disruption. Compared with what is being asked of New South Wales teachers, that is a small request. People should remember that our offer means money in teachers' pockets now—not in several months when the full bench of the Industrial Relation Commission decides the matter.