



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 5 September 2000

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Science and SOSE Syllabuses

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.59 a.m.), by leave: I table the Queensland Years 1-10 science syllabus. It evolved through comprehensive curriculum development processes involving experts from schools, universities and Catholic and non-Government systems. However, Education Queensland does not rely upon the syllabus alone. We developed an implementation plan for State schools as required under the Act. These supporting documents should also be noted: the initial in-service materials, the source book and current modules, and materials specifically produced for use by our State schools to ensure that maximum benefit is gained from the syllabus. These include quite explicit lists of content expectations to assist schools. This is the normal process for curriculum development and implementation under the Act.

There has been some media interest in the new study of society and environment syllabus. This critique is going on ahead of the implementation plan, that is, before the documents that will compose the course materials are complete. That is after this equivalent, but well before all of this.

The genesis of SOSE was the Hobart declaration of April 1989 in which Commonwealth and State Education Ministers adopted the agreed national goals for schooling, including the eight key learning areas, one of which was studies of society and environment.

Mr Quinn interjected.

Mr WELLS: I said 1989. It is within this national framework that the current SOSE syllabus in Queensland has been developed. Professor Ken Wiltshire refers to it repeatedly in his 1994 report on curriculum, *Shaping the Future*. He recommended that the eight key learning areas, including SOSE, should be the framework for the core curriculum in Years 1-8.

There is nothing new or novel about studies of society and environment. It is not something that this Government has invented since coming to office. If there is criticism of SOSE and the Curriculum Council that has produced it, I remind the honourable member for Merrimac that it was his decision in 1996 to establish an independent and autonomous statutory authority and it was his decision to populate it with nominees of the major stakeholders—the teachers, the parents, the systemic authorities and the universities. Although the former Minister now seeks to disown the syllabus' conception, I remind him that he signed off on the P-12 curriculum strategic plan in November 1997 that included the work plan for the development of SOSE.

I do not mention these things to be critical of my predecessor but simply to remind the House that this syllabus has a long history that has enjoyed the support of Governments from both sides of the House. The work that has gone into developing the syllabus has involved the most extensive consultation ever undertaken for a Queensland syllabus document. This is why we have heard little criticism from Queensland educators. However, as part of the implementation process in State schools, criticisms raised by individuals will be addressed by my director-general.

In developing the implementation plan for this syllabus, the director-general will establish a panel of educators to advise him on how best to implement SOSE in State schools. He will follow a similar implementation process to the one that my previous director-general used with respect to the science syllabus.

The SOSE syllabus represents for the first time in 20 years a guarantee that all students up to Year 10 will study history, geography and civics. It will make certain that the curriculum has particular relevance for today's students and tomorrow's Australia.
