



Speech by

GARY FENLON

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard 16 March 2000

TEACHERS

Mr FENLON (Greenslopes—ALP) (6.39 p.m.): It is a pleasure to rise in support of the amendment to this motion. I do so declaring a great interest in the education area. I am a registered teacher, I am an office-holder in my daughter's P & C and I worked for five years as an advocate for a teachers union in another State.

I have gone to some trouble through this process to be briefed and to ask for further information from the office of the Minister and, indeed, the Teachers Union. I am informed that that additional information from the union has arrived in my office today. I am really trying my best to keep up with the fine detail of this particular issue, as the teachers in the schools in my electorate have asked me to do. I have reported back to them in detail about my examination of those materials.

This is indeed a very important issue. It is important to teachers as well as to the wider community. It is important to the wider community because this pay issue is inextricably bound to the issue of school-based management, which was being pushed on our communities by the previous Government.

Let us look at the deal under the previous Government. There was certainly a pay offer that was linked to school-based management. The deal was, "Take the 30 pieces of silver and agree to the dismantlement of our school system." Teachers were asked to agree to the destruction of our school system. It was to be turned into a hierarchical system that was foreign to what we as Queenslanders have lived with for well over a century. It was to be turned into an uneven, almost class based, hierarchical system—rewarding some schools and leaving the others to float off into the mist. That is how it worked: "Take the 30 pieces of silver and away you go." That was the deal.

Our deal is very different. While the teachers get the 30 pieces of silver, they in fact get consideration for GST. At the end of the day, they probably get their 33 pieces of silver. That is at no cost to the community, because our proposal to the teachers is not linked to the dismantlement of our education system. This is a very clear offer. In fact, it is an approach to school-based management that has been soundly based on community consultation, freedom of choice and equity.

Indeed, unlike our predecessors, this Government took the time and made the effort to talk extensively with the community regarding school-based management. That occurred in the second half of 1998. At the end of the 1999 school year, school communities received a comprehensive explanation of the proposed future directions and frameworks for school-based management. All school communities, rather than only a chosen few, were provided with the opportunity to collaboratively determine the best model of school-based management to suit their schools, and they are very happy about it. That is unlike the previous shonky deal to destroy the system.

Equally, the additional resources to support school-based management were shared among all schools, rather than just the few select leading schools. This provided all schools with the platform to grow and develop their own evolving approach to school-based management with the support of their community.

This Government immediately redressed the inequality of only a proportion of our Band 8 to 11 school principals receiving a 5% salary increase. Now we are taking this further by extending an offer of a reasonable additional 2% salary increase to our Band 4 to 7 principals and classified teachers.

This approach is in sharp contrast to the secretive, condescending and dictatorial approach taken by the previous Government that ultimately led to a complete breakdown in the relationship with our teachers and, indeed, with our communities. Our communities saw right through the deal that the previous Government was proposing—the selective Leading Schools model. One of the great sighs of relief heard throughout our school communities right across this State was, "Thank God we don't have to go with that silly Leading Schools system."

Time expired.
