



Speech by

WARREN PITT

MEMBER FOR MULGRAVE

Hansard 16 March 2000

TEACHERS

Mr PITT (Mulgrave—ALP) (6.20 p.m.): I rise to support the amendment moved by the member for Kedron and Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations. As a former teacher, I understand more than most the valuable role played by teachers in this State. However, unlike the Opposition, this Government has a far-reaching vision and a genuine commitment to the future of Queensland State education. Suitable remuneration is only one aspect of that commitment.

The Beattie Government has a strong commitment to fair wages outcomes for employees in the public sector, and if anyone on the other side suggests otherwise, they are only repeating a falsehood. The philosophy that surrounds previous rounds of enterprise bargaining negotiations involved a deliberate attempt of political decision makers to trade off conditions of employment for salary outcomes. Employees were forced to contend with ever-increasing demands and obstacles in an effort to secure those wage outcomes.

Quite frankly, teachers have no more to trade off. Teachers are being offered an EB with no claims by Education Queensland for trade-offs or productivity increases. There is also a difficulty, I understand, for the department to sustain an argument to increase the wage offer for teachers above that of a nurse, police officer or public servant. I do, however, acknowledge the unique demands placed on the teaching profession in an increasingly complex educational environment.

The Government has reached agreement with the Queensland Public Sector Union for an increase of 3% per annum for public servants generally, and it looks increasingly likely that a similar outcome will be negotiated with the railways union. The offer on hand still ensures that Queensland teachers remain among the highest paid in Australia and, most importantly, does not seek to reduce the conditions of employment, as is occurring in other States.

I am pleased to note that the offer has accounted for the impact of the GST. The importance of this factor should not be underestimated. It provides the opportunity to revisit the EB if the GST impacts negatively on the real value of wages. This Government is aware that unions and employees are concerned that there may be an adverse impact from the introduction of the GST from 1 July this year. It is rather strange that people from the other side of the House should be supporting this motion when they are the very people who put in place a GST regime which could have those very negative impacts. As such, the department has indicated that it is prepared to include—

Mr FELDMAN: I rise to a point of order. We who moved this motion did not have anything to do with the GST. That was someone else.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

Mr PITT: As I said, as such, the department has indicated that it is prepared to include a GST safety net clause within any agreement that is reached between Education Queensland and unions. Indeed, a draft clause has already been tabled by the department during negotiations.

I am heartened to see that the department is continually considering initiatives outside of enterprise bargaining negotiations, with a view to benefiting student outcomes and the work performed by teachers. Moreover, Education Queensland has advanced significant resources in relation to behaviour management strategies through the provision of an additional 300 full-time equivalent

positions. I urge Education Queensland to continue to pursue these initiatives which are crucial to the enhancement of the teaching/learning process.

A great deal of work is being undertaken by Education Queensland on the development of innovative policies and initiatives. I am of the view that teachers not only want fair wages outcomes but also want the Government to work towards improving conditions which enhance the teaching/learning process. Some of the key initiatives and policies that I would like to draw to the attention of the House are, firstly, the secondary school renewal program. Under this program, the Government will spend up to \$114m over the next three years to reinvigorate secondary school education in Queensland.

The program extends the Building Better Schools program to ensure that students have access to high quality learning environments to complete their school studies. Many of our high schools were built in the fifties and sixties and now need upgrading to provide the best conditions for contemporary curriculum learning. The program targets older secondary schools that have been in need of significant renewal for many years and those that are also challenged by the changing demographic profile and expectations of their local communities. This is an action of a Government that cares about education. It is an ideal opportunity for high schools that are part of the program to involve parents and the wider community.

Just recently in my electorate the Minister launched a program, the Partners for Success Strategy for Indigenous Education. The Government has reached a milestone in indigenous education this week with the launch of that groundbreaking new strategy. It represents the first initiative of its kind in the history of education in Queensland.

Time expired.
