



Speech by

Hon. ANNA BLIGH

MEMBER FOR SOUTH BRISBANE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gifted and Talented Students

Hon. A. M. BLIGH (South Brisbane—ALP) (Minister for Education) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: The state government has a longstanding commitment to providing for the needs of gifted and talented students. Earlier this year, the previous minister commissioned a review by an independent consultant, Mr Ken Imison, in order to provide advice and directions for the education of gifted and talented students in Queensland. I have considered the recommendations and am pleased to announce an initial response to these recommendations.

Firstly, Mr Imison's primary recommendation that gifted education must be established as core business in schools is endorsed. This government recognises that, to create a Smart State, the curricula needs to provide challenges to all students and the potential of gifted and talented students needs to be recognised. This is a core message of QSE 2010. Secondly, the recommendation that a review of Education Queensland's policy on gifted education be undertaken will be implemented to ensure that the gifts and talents of our students are nurtured and developed, giving them the foundation that they need to enter further education, training and employment.

An eminent academic, Professor Peter Freebody, will lead the review. Professor Freebody is a Professor in the Faculty of Education and Director of the Centre for Literacy and Language Education Research at Griffith University. Professor Freebody will be supported by a team with academic qualifications in gifted education as well as vast practical experience, such as Dr Jim Watters from QUT, who is also a member of the Gifted and Talented Association. Consultation will occur with a wide range of community and education groups and schools in this policy review. Thirdly, the recommendation that new focus schools or, as they are now known, learning and development centres for the gifted and talented, be gradually established will occur. This will start with the funding of one new centre in an area of the state which is not currently serviced by one of the existing seven centres.

In addition, I am pleased to advise that the current seven learning and development centres for the gifted and talented will continue to operate at Caloundra State High School, Denison State School, Eagle Junction State School, Mackay North State High School, Nambour State School, Robertson State School and Townsville State High School. I reaffirm the government's commitment to these learning and development centres, which act as hubs for a network of schools providing valuable ongoing support.

I commend the staff of these centres for their commitment to the education of gifted and talented students. The state government is committed to a funding program for these learning and development centres for the next three years providing certainty and continuity, allowing for a plan which will encompass a broader network of schools.

Finally, in response to the recommendation that these centres are better resourced, each of the eight centres will have a full-time coordinator and current operational annual funding will almost double to \$20,000. This, together with the broadening network of schools working with the established learning and development centres, will ensure a more equitable spread of resources and support for gifted education across the state. Other recommendations of the report will be responded to more fully in the context of Professor Freebody's policy review.

Education Queensland also has a range of other programs which recognise, celebrate and extend students in particular areas of excellence. These include the Musically Outstanding Students

Program, the Minister's Awards for Art, the Information and Communication Technology Program to provide extension in the area of information technology for senior students, the T. J. Ryan Awards for students who excel in academic performance and leadership and, more recently, involvement in the trialling of the World Class Testing Program. It is a coup for Queensland to be involved in the World Class Test trial. Smart State teachers will benefit from communicating with colleagues who work with high achievers around the world.

This year the Beattie government also established eight centres for excellence in technology, maths and science as part of our election platform. These centres aim to provide extension for students who demonstrate high ability in one or more of these areas. I would like to thank Mr Imison for his work on this report, which will be available today on the Education Queensland web site. I look forward to meeting with Mr Imison in the new year to discuss his report further. I have this week written to key educational groups to inform them of my continued support for the education of gifted and talented students and the directions Education Queensland will take in 2002 in this important area.
