



Speech by

Hon. GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 21 August 2002

PUBLIC SECTOR, ENTERPRISE BARGAINING

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (6.19 p.m.): I am pleased to be able to second the amendment by the Premier this evening because it gives me an opportunity, as the Industrial Relations Minister, to set the record straight and to correct the nonsense being peddled by the opposition during this round of enterprise bargaining. As the minister, I assure honourable members and the public that no amount of distractions, emotions or mischief-making from the opposition will deter me or this government from resolving enterprise bargaining negotiations and agreements. Let me make it very clear: we will resolve these disputes. At this point in time there is no crisis whatsoever. Let us have a look at the facts. There are no industrial bans in place. There are no strikes, rallies, disruptions to services or patient care at this time in terms of enterprise bargaining agreements.

Miss Simpson: What about on 29 August?

Mr NUTTALL: We are talking about now. As I said, there is nothing wrong now. Let us worry about 29 August if and when it happens. The government has 52 enterprise bargaining agreements to negotiate. Right now, seven of those agreements have expired. Those seven agreements represent more than half of our 175,000 employees. As I said earlier today, our nurses are in arbitration and both sides will be required to accept the decision of the federal commission. There is no industrial action, no strikes and no disruptions to patient care at this time.

In relation to negotiations with Q-Build workers, again, there are no bans or strikes. Negotiations are continuing with Main Roads. Again, there are no bans and no strikes. Negotiations are continuing with non-nursing health unions. Again, there are no industrial bans or strikes. It is business as usual in Queensland and business as usual for this government.

As I have said, the only ones trying to drum up a crisis this evening are members opposite. They are the ones furthest from the negotiating table and the ones least likely to know how negotiations are going. It is very easy to stand outside the compound and throw grenades over the fence without coming up with any solutions. At the end of the day, finger pointing, expensive television campaigns, fighting funds and mischief-making from the opposition will not resolve enterprise bargaining negotiations. The only way to reach any solution in any enterprise bargaining is to sit around the negotiating table. That is what I have been doing as minister. I have been sitting down and talking to the unions.

Mr Seeney: You wouldn't even participate.

Mr NUTTALL: The member should be quiet. We will continue to work with the trade unions to seek a resolution to these disputes. As we have said as a government previously, if we were to concede to every one of the union's present claims, we would have to find almost \$3 billion in recurrent funding. The annual budget for the government is \$19 billion. We are not talking about a one-off payment for a building or any other government project. As I said, we are talking about \$3 billion in recurrent funding. In three years time, we will be back at it again. Of the \$19 billion government budget, \$7.05 billion is already spent on wages. It is ridiculous to think that the government would increase

taxes specifically to pay for a wage increase. It would be wrong of us to ask every Queensland household tomorrow to fork out \$530. That is what it would take to meet the demands of the seven EB negotiations before us at present. Over the next two or three years, that would become \$700 a household and from there on \$1,000 a household. It is neither right nor proper for us to accede to the demands of the unions. The offer that we have put on the table is fair and reasonable. It is above the average private sector wage increase, which is 2.9 per cent. It is above the Consumer Price Index, which is currently 2.8 per cent. 3.5 per cent is fair and reasonable.

Time expired.