



Speech by

Hon. GORDON NUTTALL

MEMBER FOR SANDGATE

Hansard 4 September 2002

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Enterprise Bargaining

Hon. G. R. NUTTALL (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (11.19 a.m.), by leave: In a little over a week the government has made considerable progress in the current enterprise bargaining negotiations with those unions representing two-thirds of our 175,000 strong work force. Last Friday week, Q-Build workers accepted the government's pay offer of 3.5 per cent per annum over 42 months and improved superannuation. On Tuesday of last week, Queensland's non-nursing health unions agreed to ballot 27,000 health workers, again with an offer of 3.5 per cent per annum. While those ballots are not expected to be finalised for several weeks, the offer would give our health workers a 3.8 per cent pay rise over 39 months: the first being from 1 June this year; the second being from 1 July next year; the third being from 1 August in the year 2004; with the agreement expiring on 31 August, 2005. The government and the seven unions representing these workers have agreed that these deals are fair and reasonable for our health workers and our Q-Build workers. Our offer is higher than the average annual pay increase in the private sector and higher than the national CPI.

The government increased its offer from three per cent per annum to 3.5 per cent per annum because we value our employees. The enterprise bargaining process is never easy. Both sides are disadvantaged by an out-of-date system that rewards the squeakiest wheel and relies on confrontation as a way to secure a pay rise. Despite the hype and the emotion that is the public face of enterprise bargaining, it is important to acknowledge that there is no crisis presently in the Public Service. There are no bans affecting service delivery, no industrial action, no work to rule, no walkouts. Yes, all unions have a right to rally like some have chosen to do today—and that is their right—but there is no crisis. Around the negotiating table, which is where my negotiators and I are several times a week, it is business as usual. I would like to assure honourable members of the House that we are constructively working through the five outstanding agreements still on the table and we will find a solution just as we have with our Q-Build workers and our non-nursing health unions.

In the meantime, the government and the union movement have agreed to work together to review the current enterprise bargaining system. I look forward to updating honourable members of the House on the progress of that review.