



Speech by

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—Lib) (6.50 pm): I rise tonight to raise an issue of deep concern to me and I certainly hope an issue of deep concern to my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the House. Yesterday in this place the minister for education stood up and made the following comments, recorded on page 1511 of *Hansard*, when fielding a question about applications for Commonwealth grants. The minister said that the federal government found that it had no legal basis to do that—that being dealing directly with parent bodies. She said that it could not do it, so we the states have to do it for them.

If one then reads the outline of the Investing in Our Schools program—I table a copy of that for the benefit of members along with a copy of the Australian government's state school application form for that program; a program run by the federal government—one will read the following passage in paragraph 6 of the introduction. It states—

Under the 'Investing in our schools' program communities can apply directly to the Australian Government for funding. Either a 'Government School Community Organisation' or a school body in conjunction with the school principal can apply for funds for projects that they consider a priority to improve and enhance the educational amenity of their school.

These words in the grants outline are diametrically opposed to the assertion by the minister that the federal government found it could not do this. There are two possible scenarios. The first one that I would like to believe is that the minister simply did not understand the Investing in Our Schools program to the level that she should have, thus inadvertently misleading parliament. This is nonetheless disturbing because we are talking about the education minister for the state of Queensland. If she does not know the details of the programs run by the federal government—programs that are available to schools in Queensland—then there will be a number of schools in Queensland not receiving all of the funding that they could receive. I also would have thought that an answer to a question asked by the member for Stafford, a member of her own party, would have yielded a response that was factually correct. If the minister cannot even get Dorothy Dixers correct, how will she address the myriad other problems in the education department?

The second possibility is that the minister simply misled the House because she did not want the issue to be discussed any further; she wants to obfuscate the federal government's contribution to Queensland state schools to overcome the poor allocations by this government.

While the first scenario shows that there is a level of incompetence on the minister's part, it was by no means deceitful. If, however, the second scenario is the case and the minister deliberately misled the House, there are serious issues regarding ethics and the minister's ability to perform her tasks appropriately.

It is up to the minister to stand up in this place and tell us which it was. We know that the minister was incorrect and that her statement was misleading. That is evidenced when comparing her words in *Hansard* with the words of the very application form and outline of the program she was talking about. It is now a matter for the minister to stand up in this place and tell the parliament whether she misled the parliament because she did not know the program well enough or whether she misled the House deliberately.