



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

Hansard Wednesday, 12 November 2008

MOTION: BEATTIE-BLIGH GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC RELATIONS

Mr LANGBROEK (Surfers Paradise—LNP) (6.05 pm): It is my pleasure to rise to speak to this motion moved by the member for Caloundra, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to support it and oppose the amendment moved by the government.

This motion is all about priorities. This motion is about striking a balance. No-one is saying that no-one can have media people or promotions people, but let us have a look at some of the priorities of this government within the departments for which I have the shadow ministry responsibility—that is education, skills and the arts. We have learned recently that since September 2007 the Premier has spent over \$1 million on advertising and publications that have her photograph in them. We know that \$1.5 million has been spent on the Q2 campaign. In the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, the number of public affairs staff has increased from 28 in 2001-02 to 110 in 2006-07 and the cost of those staff rose from \$1.7 million to \$5.2 million in 2005-06. I acknowledge that Arts Queensland and arts statutory authorities joined this department in 2004-05 and that the training department joined in 2006-07, but that is still a great increase.

Also in the Department of Education, Training and the Arts, in 2006-07 external consultants cost \$2.2 million. So across those few categories that I have just mentioned we have \$10 million spent on what the minister just came in here and said in his contribution to this debate: celebrating, promoting and promising. So let us have a look at some of the promises that the minister and the government used to supposedly talk about what they are going to do. Let us look at their achievements.

The main achievement that most Queenslanders would be aware of through the government's State Schools of Tomorrow program is that it is closing schools. The government wants to promote that as well—not just through the State Schools of Tomorrow program but also through other programs. Let us have a look at the schools that are proposed to be mothballed or set for closure. At the moment we have the Dinmore and Blackstone schools in the electorate of Bundamba; Majors Creek school in the electorate of Burdekin; Yaraka school in the electorate of Gregory, which was reviewed on 26 November; Lucinda Point school in the electorate of Hinchinbrook has already closed; Nerimbera school in the electorate of Keppel; Junction View school in the electorate of Lockyer; Dows Creek school, which was announced yesterday, in the electorate of Mirani; Kenilworth State College in the electorate of Nicklin, which has been changed to a P-7 from a P-10 school; Upper Barron school in the electorate of Tablelands, which was announced yesterday; Wycombe school, in the electorate of Warrego; and Muckadilla school, also in the electorate of Warrego. As well, the member for Inala, who is present in this place, is sitting by while the government closes the Richlands and Inala West schools. We have Bremer State High School and Amberley State School closing. We have the Xavier Special School that wants to stay at Whites Hill college. Instead, it is being moved to Mount Gravatt West Special School. Of course, in the electorate of the Deputy Premier we have the Wynnum North, Wynnum Central and Lindum schools being merged.

That is what the spin doctors are talking about. They are trying to promote those closures. They are talking about having some sort of pride in the fact that they are closing these schools and making some sort of virtue of the fact that they are making bigger schools and that this will make educational results better when, clearly, that is not true.

Let us have a look at one area that would be critical to people throughout Queensland—one-teacher schools. That is a very small area when we consider that the government spent \$10 million across a few categories of promotion. One-teacher schools are part of the regional and remote cohort that the education minister has blamed for dragging down the rest of the state when the national literacy and numeracy results came out. Yet we see that the government has made numerous promises via its spin doctors. It promised that it would provide a quality education system that delivers opportunities for all students to achieve learning outcomes and reach their potential. But unfortunately, in these one-teacher schools that means that up to eight grades can be enrolled in a single classroom with one teacher and up to 26 students.

In one-teacher schools where the enrolment is more than 20, one teacher cannot provide opportunities for all students to achieve their potential. Whilst teacher aides can assist with curriculum delivery, it is not their responsibility to prepare lessons, assessment tasks or individualised programs.

Only five hours of teacher aide time has been given to these one-teacher schools, unless they have 16 students in prep. They are unlikely to have 16 out of 25 students in one class. That promise was made in the Department of Education, Training and the Arts strategic plan for 2006-2010. It is just one of the promises that the government has either not lived up to or tried to promote as showing that it is actually doing something for the people of Queensland. Under our Results Plus policy, we will take Queenslanders back to the top of class. We say it is not the teachers' fault. We want to retain our dedicated staff. There has been a 20 per cent increase in teacher resignations, from 1,053 in 2006 to 1,268 in 2007. We believe in smaller classes, more teachers for special needs and full-time teacher aides. We do not believe big is better.