



Speech by

## Andrew Powell

MEMBER FOR GLASS HOUSE

Hansard Tuesday, 27 October 2009

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### TEACHERS

**Mr POWELL** (Glass House—LNP) (9.55 pm): When is the Bligh Labor government going to stop playing politics with our teachers and students? Let me give members just three brief examples—examples of a pilfering and penny-pinching bureaucracy. On several occasions I have raised the concerns of parents that, after a long-fought battle by the Australian Primary Principals Association and the Queensland Teachers Union, state schools were seeing very little of the extra \$100 per student agreed upon by the federal government. These schools have been promised only \$10,000 from the Bligh Labor government, regardless of whether they have 30 or 300 students. As one parent has told me—

This battle was paid for by financial members contributing their own funds to lobby governments and ensure that funding is equitable and appropriate. While this—

the \$10,000—

is a small percentage of the full funds awarded by the Federal Government, it is still better than nothing at all. Unfortunately, despite promises that the schools would receive this \$10,000 funding as part of their term 4 payment, the funding has still not materialised. It is Politics, pilfering and penny pinching.

My second example relates to teacher relief funding. Schoolteachers receive 10 days of sick leave a year as well as allocations for carer's leave, maternity leave and so on. Reports have shown that teachers use up the majority of these days each year. Unfortunately, schools receive only between 3½ and 4½ days of teacher relief funding per teacher. A prep student will tell you that 3½ does not equal 10. So what recourse do principals have? Do they cancel leave? No. It is an entitlement. Do they withhold teacher relief? No. Who looks after the kids? Put simply, principals arrange for relief and then hope and pray they do not go over their allocation because, if they do, it means cuts in other areas—areas such as student resources, excursions, sporting events or much needed school maintenance. It is penny pinching.

My final example is to do with the rollout of BER funding. But let me use the words of Mr Kelvin Mickelson, a member of the P&C at Glass House Mountains State School. In response to a reply from the minister for education he said—

I am mystified by your department's inept manner it engages with stakeholders. I received the attached correspondence and I have come to the conclusion I am dealing with a group bent on deception and deceit. The department took six months to reply; knowing full well the building will be completed by that time. In my view this approach suggests—

the minister—

Geoff and his department are not prepared to be transparent or accountable for the expenditure of public monies.

...

Your Project Manager conveniently overlooked the P&C until I raised the issue ... in June, well after construction started.

...

Lastly, I have been in the finished product and the \$2.5 million is, in my view, a gross example of mismanagement of public funds.

...

Your department has seen it fit to trivialise and run roughshod over this issue. Your unprofessional approach was not expected or welcomed.

...

In closing, we have a building and expansions and the children and school will use it; however for those which are in the know—  
the minister—

and the Governments could have achieved better results.

As for a solution, I add my voice to the federal government report, which was reported in the *Australian* today, which called for a devolution of decision making and funding to the principal. The government should stop playing politics and let the principals decide what his or her kids need most to excel.