



Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Tuesday, 1 September 2009

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Public Sector, Enterprise Bargaining Agreements

Hon. CR DICK (Greenslopes—ALP) (Attorney-General and Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.10 am): Today, 1 September 2009, marks the changeover date for the Queensland government's new wages policy for public sector employees. The Bligh government remains committed to ensuring that public sector employees get a fair and equitable pay deal while delivering quality services to the rapidly growing number of people who call Queensland home.

I am pleased to be able to inform the House of the successful completion of the current round of public sector enterprise bargaining negotiations for agreements expiring between the middle of 2007 and the end of 2009, with almost all agreements concluded in accordance with the government's current fair, equitable and financially responsible wages policy. Over 80 agreements covering employees of government departments, statutory authorities and government owned corporations have now been concluded. Agreements or agreements in principle have been reached with public sector employee groups such as the core Queensland Public Service, firefighters, nurses, TAFE teachers, school cleaners and Public Works employees.

The economic times facing all Queenslanders are tough, but the enterprise bargaining agreements we have concluded are fair in these tough times. We continue to stand by our commitment to keep Queensland working and to keep Queenslanders in jobs while paying them a fair wage. That is the commitment we took to the last state election and that is the commitment we continue to stand by. The Queensland Public Sector Union stated yesterday in relation to the agreement concluded for core Queensland public servants—

We think 12.5 per cent is a fair and reasonable offer given the current very difficult circumstances facing the Queensland Government as a result of the global financial crisis.

This government supports jobs, not job cuts. While over 80 agreements have now been concluded or concluded in principle, just two agreements remain outstanding—those relating to visiting medical officers and Queensland teachers. I can advise the House that last-minute negotiations are occurring with the visiting medical officers. Regrettably, negotiations on the enterprise bargaining agreement for Queensland teachers is currently before the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. When times are tough and the economic conditions all Queenslanders face are difficult, it is inevitable that there will be robust discussions in wage negotiations, and for those areas where the parties are unable to agree the independent umpire, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission, is well placed to assist.

It is very regrettable indeed that an agreement has not been able to be concluded with Queensland teachers. The government is ready to put money into the pockets of teachers. The offer that the government has put to them is a fair and reasonable proposal given the circumstances facing our state. The commission will make an interim decision on the matter over the next week. At that stage it is hoped a wage outcome for the short term will be resolved.

I thank and congratulate all those involved for their efforts in achieving positive outcomes in relation to the over 80 agreements that have been concluded or concluded in principle which will benefit hardworking Queensland public sector employees delivering essential services to all Queenslanders.

The Bligh government's new wages policy is a responsible policy in tough economic times. The new wages policy limits wage increases to 2.5 per cent annually until the budget returns to surplus. It is a fair deal for which fair notice has been given for an anticipated low-inflation future. The Bligh government will continue its commitment to govern responsibly in the current economic downturn.