

Topic: MOTION

Subject: MOTION - Censure of Minister for Education - Motion, as amended, agreed to.

Date : 01/05/1991

Member : Mr BELL

Status : MacDonnell

Information :

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I move that this Assembly censure the Minister for Education for:

- (1) failing to consult with parents, teachers and the community about the closure of 11 pre and primary schools;
- (2) causing distress to students and parents by the closure of 11 pre and primary schools;
- (3) compromising the quality of education of Territory children for short-term cost savings; and
- (4) retaining a bloated administration while diminishing the number of face-to-face teachers.

On the face of it, the minister has made a courageous, if not entirely honest, attempt to justify what has been, as the opposition demonstrated yesterday, an extraordinarily hasty and dishonest exercise. In moving this motion of censure against the minister, I intend to argue the types of issues which deserve to be argued in public because I believe that they

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should be placed on the public record of the Northern Territory. My central concern is that I do not believe that the consultation process between the government and the people of the Territory has been appropriate. I believe also that the quality of education of Territory kids has been hopelessly compromised. I believe that the minister has been conned by his department. The service providers, the teachers who provide the face-to-face services, and the kids who benefit from them, are the ones who are bearing the brunt of this exercise. In addition, I believe that the general distress caused to students and their parents has seriously compromised the quality of education available to them.

In my view, the Minister for Education stands condemned for his inept, uncaring and essentially dishonest handling of cuts to the education budget. His ineptness is highlighted by his inability to trim the bloated bureaucracy which makes up the department's senior levels. The member for Wanguri raised this issue in question time yesterday and again today. The figures he presented, and the figures I presented in my

question without notice, give a very clear indication of the situation in that regard. In the context of this debate, I place on record again the figures presented in the minister's own publication. There are 262 identified positions that have been cut, and the minister should not give us this nonsense about attrition and so forth. These are cuts in services to schools, to kids. They represent a real disadvantage for Territory students.

Yesterday, ministers spoke about the Departments of Primary Industry and Fisheries and Industries and Development as wealth-creating departments which should not be cut. What a load of nonsense! If ever there is a public investment which generates wealth, it is the investment in the minds of our children.

Mr Stone: Good emotive stuff.

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection from the Minister for Education. It indicates the kind of cynicism he brings to this portfolio. He shouts across the Chamber: 'Good emotive stuff'. I am sorry to disillusion him but, like every member on this side of the House, I happen to believe that we should be working towards a smarter Australia. I know that people like the Minister for Transport and Works do not believe that we are really part of Australia but, on this side of the House, we believe that we are part of Australia and that the Territory should be playing its part to create a smarter Australian work force comprised of people who are able to contribute to life in the broadest possible way.

The dishonesty of the Minister for Education has been demonstrated amply by the figures. Of the 262 positions identified as having to be cut, 182 - an incredible 70% - will be lost as a direct result of school closures and changes to the staff-student formula and, while I am on that subject, let me refute another furphy from the Minister for Education this morning. The member for Millner asked a very well-argued question in respect of the Rapid Creek Primary School. He referred to the quality programs which are conducted at that school, and I will come back to those in a moment. In response, the Minister for Education asked: 'What do we do? The place is running at only 50% of capacity'. Let me get this argument on the rails to start with.

Mr Stone: What are your Labor colleagues doing interstate?

Mr BELL: I will come to that in a moment but, for the time being, let me concentrate on Rapid Creek Primary School and the minister's answer in

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that regard. He talked about 50% capacity, and he said that the government should not be keeping open schools which, to use his phrase, are running at '50% of capacity'. In the case of the vast majority of urban primary schools like Rapid Creek Primary School, the government does not owe money on the land or the buildings, which were inherited from the Commonwealth government and have never been a cost to this government. The fact that 50% of the rooms in them may not be occupied does not represent a waste of money. It may be that the minister will say that those resources can be put to better use. COGSO is concerned that the government has its eyes on a few areas of prime real estate in respect of schools that it is proposed should be closed.

If the minister has some plans for these schools, at least he should be patent about them. However, let us assume that he is being honest in this regard and that there are no concrete plans - for example, to turn

Traeger Park Primary School into a hospital. That is one rumour doing the rounds. One of the reasons that rumours are doing the rounds is because of the extraordinarily hasty way in which the government has gone about this exercise. The point is that the minister is making a logical mistake when he talks about 50% of capacity. He is assuming that the other 50% can somehow be turned into productive capacity, but those are public assets and they should remain as such.

While I am on the subject of Rapid Creek Primary School, it is worth while my mentioning at this stage that I wrote to the minister on 18 April, in the context of this absurd public debate, about rumours and counter rumours etc that were produced by the minister himself. If there is any reason why this censure motion ought to succeed, it is because, for a good month, the Minister for Education himself has compromised the quality of education by creating furore in schools like Anzac Hill High School and Traeger Park Primary School. How would any member like to be a student at Traeger Park Primary School or Rapid Creek Primary School, knowing that it is to be closed at the end of this year? That fact poses an absolutely impossible, pedagogical task for the teachers involved and makes it an absolute impossibility for the students in those schools to receive a decent education.

I wrote to the Minister for Education with respect to Rapid Creek Primary School, and I will quickly read that letter, Mr Speaker. It is interesting history. It is dated 18 April and says:

Dear Mr Stone,

You have publicly stated 'schools will be closed'. You have further stated that they will be closed because of either

- (a) inadequate programs being offered as a result of staffing difficulties, or
- (b) cost savings effected by the closure.

Rapid Creek Primary School, a recently upgraded, efficiently-used community facility of 25 years tradition, is being considered for closure. The staff are dedicated, caring and achieving excellence in education. In the recent National Westpac Maths Awards, there were numerous prizes, distinctions and credits awarded. The maths competition, run by the University of New South Wales, yielded top distinctions, distinctions and credits. These achievements, decided by independent outside assessment on a national level, would be the envy of any primary school in Australia. First prizes in the Northern Territory Literary Awards and final selection in the

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National Dorothea Mac Kellar Poetry Competition attest to the quality of education.

It is a nationally-adopted policy to develop a Language Other Than English Program. Rapid Creek Primary School is the only primary school in the Northern Territory that provides foreign language instruction from preschool right through to Year 7. In fact, not 1 but 2 foreign languages are offered.

To close this school as a result of 'inadequate programs' would be a gross insult to the professional competence and achievement of the staff. It would be a slur on their ability to teach which they would carry with them on their disrupted career paths. To close this school would show little or no appreciation for the diversity and quality of courses being implemented. To close this school would show what you

think about developing a clever country.

In regard to cost savings, not one audited set of accounts has been presented by yourself to show where any financial savings can be made. Such is the level of your guaranteed consultative process and, Mr Stone, just how much do you enter on the debit side of your ledger for such things as disruption of family routine, danger from crossing major arterials, dissolution of community spirit, dispersal of children's friendships and loss of value of neighbourhood homes?

Mr Stone, if you close any school in the Territory on economic grounds, it will be clear the CLP's philosophy on education is buy a pub, close a school.

Yours faithfully.

Mr Stone: Could you table that?

Mr BELL: I seek leave to table that letter.

Leave granted.

Mr Stone: Good, because I have not seen it.

Mr Bailey: He has not seen it!

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, there are 2 points in that letter in which I am particularly interested. The central issue is the tone of a school, the capacity for kids to receive education and to be involved actively in a process of learning. Nobody should appreciate this better than the Minister for Education who, like myself, spent some time as a school teacher. The quality of the institution, the tone of the institution, is crucial. The minister rises in this Assembly and says blithely that those programs can be transferred elsewhere. I do not believe that that can be possible on the basis of the type of process that the minister has carried out.

The second point I want to make in respect of Rapid Creek Primary School relates to something that is of a particular interest to me, and that is the Language Other Than English program. There is a national language policy document that I believe should be the subject of debate in this Assembly, and it is my intention to raise it either in an adjournment debate or at some other time. I believe that that Language Other Than English program at Rapid Creek Primary School deserves strong support because, if we are to make sense of language education in the Northern Territory, on the edge of

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South-east Asia as we are, we should be aiming to have 50% of our students coming out of Year 6 or Year 7 speaking Indonesian, Mandarin or Japanese. I think that that should be a minimum objective that we should be moving towards.

Occasionally, the member for Jingili rises in this Assembly, after he has been over in Teddy's Bar, and says what an excellent idea speaking Indonesian is.

Mr SETTER: A point of order, Mr Speaker! I believe the member for MacDonnell was trying in some way to associate me with the activities of Teddy's Bar in Kupang, Indonesia. I find that imputation offensive and it is certainly untrue. I ask that he withdraw.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, the imputation exists only in the member for Jingili's own mind.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Speaker, I believe that the remarks made by the member for MacDonnell were unparliamentary and should be withdrawn. He was referring to a language program in schools and then referred to the good work that has been carried out by the member for Jingili in trying to rationalize relations with a foreign country. However, by imputation, he proceeded to cast doubt on the propriety of the member for Jingili by implying that he had spent time in a bar when he visited an overseas country. I think that is despicable on the part of the member for MacDonnell.

Mr Vale: This is supposed to be a serious debate.

Mr Hatton: Trivializing the whole thing.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the honourable member to withdraw unreservedly.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I withdraw unreservedly any reference to Teddy's Bar.

Mr Stone: Are you serious about this or what?

Mr BELL: I am, absolutely. I do not know where Teddy's Bar is, but I remember its being mentioned in respect of one of the honourable member's visits to some part of Indonesia.

Mr MANZIE: A point of order Mr Speaker! I believe that the member for MacDonnell is out of order in debating with you your decision to ask him to withdraw his remarks.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I would ask the ...

Mr Bell: There is not, you know.

Mr SPEAKER: There is a point of order in the opinion of the Speaker. The honourable member indicated that he would withdraw the remark and continue with the censure motion.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, it was essentially frivolity.

The serious issue is quite obviously that that type of target ought to be set. We should be aiming for that result. We should not be closing a

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school that is one token effort in that direction. I believe that every primary school in the Northern Territory

ought to be teaching languages.

Mr Stone: The majority of them are.

Mr BELL: In the terms of that letter, the majority of them are not. Since the time when the minister and I went to school, it has been well established that the best time for students to commence learning languages is before they reach secondary school. I will not get into that debate now. I could spend an hour talking about it, but I will not. However, the point I would make, and this goes to the substance of this debate, is that those programs, which have been developed and are a crucial part of the tone of Rapid Creek Primary School, ought to be retained. Clearly, this school has been doing some excellent work, but the comments made by the minister and the hasty decisions taken by this government have seriously compromised its tone.

The minister has closed schools and has done so with a minimum of consultation. He has done so with scant regard for parents, teachers and the school community. He has done so with no regard to the primary and preschool students whose schools are now to be wiped out with a stroke of a pen. My colleagues and I were flooded with calls from panic-stricken parents and teachers when the minister confirmed school closures. I have already referred to Rapid Creek Primary School. The member for Wanguri will refer to the minister's lightning visit to Tiwi Primary School and the member for Barkly will comment in respect of Karguru Primary School. I should indicate that, in both those cases, I am entirely bemused by the processes that have led to the decisions taken in respect of those schools. The member for Barkly will give details in that regard.

The minister's visit to Tiwi Primary School had all the hallmarks of the grim reaper. He visited the school and, all of a sudden, people were saying that the minister had told them that the school would be closed.

Mr Stone: The minister never told them at all.

Mr BELL: The minister might like to tell us what he did say because it is a little like watching his lips move and trying to work out what he said. The rumours and counter-rumours, which are entirely the responsibility of the minister himself, have created the type of chaos that I have indicated. The calls from parents and teachers to members of the opposition increased every time the minister visited a different school. The state of panic that was created gave him the appearance of being the grim reaper. I heard people say: 'Let us hope that he does not turn up here. Perhaps, if we shut up, we will be left alone'.

Mr Vale: You ought to hear what they say about you.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I look forward to the comments of the member for Braitling, whose electorate has managed to escape the burden of the cuts.

If we are talking about this from an electorate point of view, I should point out that the impact on Labor electorates, particularly bush electorates, has yet to be identified in detail. I know the schools in my electorate are reeling already from lack of maintenance and, more particularly, from lack of continuity of staff. In many cases, they are also reeling from the cuts that have been imposed by the demographers' judgments. In school after school in my electorate, I am told: 'Here are all the students. Here are the names on the rolls and here are the

demographers' figures'. I can give several examples where the demographers' figures bear absolutely no relation to reality.

Mr Stone: Well, give them.

Mr BELL: The added impact that these cuts will have on schools in my electorate makes me shiver for the life chance of kids, be they white kids at Yulara or Aboriginal kids at Kintore. If the member for Braitling wishes to interject in relation to the types of names that I am being called, I hope he will rise to make a more sensible contribution to this debate.

The whole business of these ministerial visits to schools was extraordinary. They took on the atmosphere of an emergency services squad. Their impact was made far worse by the fact that the minister spent very little time in the schools, visited schools out of hours, went to schools during school holiday periods and treated the whole consultation process with the type of arrogance for which he is rapidly becoming famous.

I referred earlier to COGSO and, by way of interjection, the minister tried to tell me that COGSO was quite happy with the school closures process. Let me disabuse him in that regard. I believe I have its statement here.

Mr Stone: Do you want me to read it out for you?

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, I regret I do not have a copy of it with me. I undertake to provide a copy of that statement to the Assembly during the day. It makes an absolute lie of the claim that COGSO accepts the closure of these schools in any way at all. More importantly, COGSO bitterly resents the lack of consultation in respect of those closures.

In reference to the campaign run by parents, there are 2 further documents that are of interest to honourable members, 1 of which comes from Millner Primary School. Basically, it stated that the government should be closing State Square and not state schools. I thought that a particularly apposite approach to the problem and, apparently, it was a successful one too. The name of this game is lobbying. In the uncontrolled atmosphere created by this government, every school had to fight for itself. It was very fortunate that the schools had COGSO as a linking organization for their efforts. The other document that I wish to table in that respect is the 'Procedures and Criteria for Closure of Schools' in the Education Bulletin of November 1985. I will not go through the entire process laid out there, but it certainly implies a greater consultation process than has been provided in this case.

I contrast both the proposals for consultation in that document and the actual process carried out with the process that has been set in train in South Australia. As I said in public debate at the time, I had taken an opportunity during a recent visit to Adelaide to be briefed by the Minister for Education, Mr Crafter, in respect of school closures. As the minister says, quite rightly, this is not the only government seeking to close schools. However, it is the only government that is seeking to close them overnight. I appreciated being advised by Mr Crafter of the process that occurred in respect of schools around Elizabeth. That department did not set a 2-month lead time for decisions in this regard. It set a 2-year period.

Mr Reed: That is the socialist way. They cannot make a decision.

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Mr BELL: I pick up the interjection. If consultation with the general public is socialism, I am a socialist. If the CLP process is to forget public education, you can have your CLP way. You can have your Tory philosophy, you can have your capitalism, you can have your laissez-faire approach to the economics of **education** because I know that there is nobody out there who will accept it.

Mr Speaker, I seek leave to table those 2 documents.

Leave granted.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, a number of comments will be made in the course of this debate about the inequity of the reductions in respect of face-to-face teaching as opposed to the impact that it has on the bureaucracy. These will be made by other opposition speakers. Also, comment will be made in respect of the increased class sizes resulting from the changing staff formula and in respect of devolution and cuts to curriculum.

Mr Speaker, I rest my case here. I have made it quite clear in respect of this motion that this minister deserves censure in the strongest possible terms for his complete failure to administer the Territory system of education in a way that continues to provide quality education for Territory students.

Mr STONE (Education): Mr Speaker, what a contrived and orchestrated exercise! On the basis of some answers given in question time, the opposition is pretending that it is so outraged that it has had to move a motion of censure, and it just happened to have the motion ready to hand out in the Chamber.

I am one of the many people who believe that education should be one of the last areas considered for budget reductions. I agree with the member for MacDonnell that education is an investment in our children's future. In the past in the Territory, reductions have been made in allocations to education. In the main, that has been handled by making reductions outside the school fence and the brunt has been borne in reductions in overheads. The exception was in 1987, when the Commonwealth reduced the Territory's budget by some \$100m. As we have heard during these sittings, the situation we face today is similar but worse. The nation is gripped by a depression and, to reduce expenditure over the last 2 years, all Australian states, without exception, have had to accept substantial reductions in their education budgets. However, I do not intend to focus on what has occurred in the states. I intend to stress that the Territory government has moved responsibly to reduce its expenditure significantly whilst taking care to minimize the impact on the community.

A complete inventory of every function carried out by the government, including all departments and employees, has been undertaken on the basis of posing the following question: 'Is the job or function necessary and, if so, can it be performed more efficiently?' The government's intention is to spread the burden of recovery fairly and squarely across the community, as it should be spread. No single area of government responsibility ...

Mr Bailey: You are a hypocrite.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I will warn the member for Wanguri once again. I do not intend to allow him to persist with disorderly conduct whilst members

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on the government benches are speaking. I have given him fair warning and I will name him the next time he offends.

Mr STONE: As I was saying, it was the government's intention to spread the burden of recovery fairly across the community. No single area of government responsibility was excluded from the process, nor should it have been. While the government has a special responsibility in relation to education, it must keep that responsibility in step with other community needs and demands. Today, the livelihood of hundreds of Territorians is quite literally on the line. In these circumstances, as I have said publicly, at the end of the day we must ensure that the basics are in place - jobs for people and food on the table. Governments must be prepared to take hard decisions for the greater good. Faced with such circumstances, it would have been unacceptable for the government not to look for efficiencies at every level, including education.

I understand the emotions which attach to education. I understand the feelings which are inevitably generated when governments are faced with the necessity of closing the doors of a school. If the Territory had failed to reduce its expenditure for another year or 2, much larger reductions would have been required. We would have found ourselves in the position of some of the states where, in addition to school closures, staff reductions, decreases in teacher contact hours and administrative efficiencies, there have been sackings, massive problems with teacher morale and general reductions in the quality of **education**. The member for MacDonnell may well quote South Australia, but at least we have not gone down the path of sacking teachers as that government was forced to do. Towards the end of last year, it sacked 800 teachers.

In setting out to rationalize expenditure, our guiding rule was to reduce the impact of decisions on schools as a whole and to attempt to make major reductions outside the school and college boundaries. The government has retained its view of awarding priority to **education** and, proportionately, the reductions have been far less than other departments have had to bear. By the end of the full year 1992-93, there will have been savings of \$15.5m in education. An overall reduction in staff of some 262 will also have been achieved. In budgetary terms, education will lose 5% within the school fence, 11.3% in education support services and 15.9% in corporate and administrative services.

The 2 strategies of last resort were school closures and reductions in the school staffing formula. The government has not introduced these measures as an option nor, as I have indicated, have they been introduced lightly. To avoid the school closures - which will not occur now but at the end of this year - further across-the-board cuts, such as increased cuts to the staffing formula, would have been necessary.

Mr Bell interjecting.

Mr STONE: I will pick up the interjection. COGSO approached the government with the request that, if schools were to be closed, that closure would be deferred until at least the end of the year. We agreed happily to that proposition. To avoid the changes in staffing which would also occur, we would have had

to switch our target back to the closure of additional schools.

In this context, I believe that Territorians should heed the words of Hugh Hudson, a renowned expert on Australian education, who investigated the program of school closures introduced in the Australian Capital Territory

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last year. I am happy to make Mr Hudson's report available to the member for MacDonnell. I am sure that Hugh Hudson would be known to the member and that he would not reject the assertion that this man is recognized as an expert in education. Mr Hudson reported: 'It is also clear that, if economies are not achieved by some process of rationalization of school sites and school land, and action is not taken to implement infill development and suburban extension, economies can always be achieved by across-the-board cuts in the number of teachers and other staff employed. Such changes would only succeed in providing a system-wide cut in educational standards'.

Our education system is a shared resource. No individual or group has a right or a mortgage which entitles them to receive more than others within our community. In the 1980s, new suburbs and communities developed in various places throughout the Territory. In the 5 years since 1986, a total of \$42m was spent by this government on new education facilities in those communities. An additional \$25m was spent on upgrading and repairs, including significant projects such as the Darwin High School Tank and the refurbishment of Anzac Hill High School. Schools such as Katherine East, Driver High, the Gray Neighbourhood Centre and Berry Springs have been built in the last 5 years. At the same time, the population in other areas dropped significantly. We are talking about a population shift in the Territory school population.

For example, in Darwin, the school population fell from 15 166 to 14 587. Despite all the growth in centres like Katherine and Palmerston, the entire Northern Territory school population increased only marginally during those 5 years, from 33 192 to 34 252. There has been a shift in that population. Today, in Darwin primary schools, 33.1% of student places are vacant across-the-board. In these times, it would be an unjustifiable indulgence for them to remain so.

I return to the findings of Hugh Hudson's report, not as a definitive statement but as an illustration of the cost of empty school places. At page 9 of the report, a table appears. It indicates that a school of 150 students costs \$3062 per student to run, whilst the same school, with 500 students, costs \$2060 per student. In order to stop wasting resources on vacant space, Hudson had to relocate 150 students. However, for each relocated student, there was a saving of \$1002 per year. Leaving aside the huge amounts which still remain to be saved in capital costs, Hudson summarizes: 'It is not unreasonable to conclude that the closure of smaller primary schools will save an average of \$210 000'. I remind the House that that is \$210 000 per year. It is recurrent funding.

At the end of this year, the following Northern Territory schools will close: Tiwi, Rapid Creek, Karguru, Traeger Park, Warrego, Ganjarani, Kiana and Berrimah Preschool. The member for MacDonnell alluded to the fact that he and I had one attribute in common, in that we had both been teachers. I do understand the concern which is being felt in each and every one of these schools. That recognition extends down to each of the students at the 3 smaller schools involved. While many more students are affected in Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, I do not believe that the concern is any less among the few students at

McArthur River or Kiana or among members of their families. For that reason, support and guidance from the Department of Education will be forthcoming for each student and family affected by the ERC process.

For some time, the government has been forecasting changes in the face of education as we move into the 1990s. The member for MacDonnell would be

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aware that we produced the Towards the 90s discussion papers and put forward our views in national debate on issues ranging from teachers' wages to the comparability of courses across state boundaries. Today, as we prepare to make the necessary changes, the 1990s are upon us. In many ways, Australia is a very different place from what it was in the 1980s. In every change to education introduced as part of the estimates review process, the government considered community needs in the 1990s. In effect, the Territory government took stock of its schooling system. We compared our ambitions and our means and the result will put us on a firm footing as we move into the next century.

If we accept that students deserve the best education that we can provide, the initiatives flowing from the estimates review process will go some way towards achieving our goal. Take the situation at Tennant Creek. Education resources at Tennant Creek are significant. Nevertheless, the amount of educational benefit to the local community is restricted by the disorganized structure within which schools and TAFE courses are presently located. The changes to be introduced at Tennant Creek, according to the recommendations of the ministerial task force, will produce significant new opportunities in education in Tennant Creek.

I would have expected the member for Barkly to be supportive of what is being proposed because, in time, with the support of the Commonwealth, there will be an opportunity for the development of a Tennant Creek TAFE complex which will stand alone within its own grounds. Based on the Karguru Primary School buildings, the new TAFE facility will begin with links to the new Palmerston TAFE centre. In time, however, the attractive option will be for the development of a TAFE institution in its own right. This is not an option within the old structure, and I would have thought that the member for Barkly would join with other citizens of Tennant Creek in supporting what is proposed.

Similar advantages apply in a more general way across the system. Again, I come back to a quote from Hugh Hudson:

The fact that schools proposed to close have good educational programs does not mean that damage will occur to the education of the children when they move to a larger school. Indeed, many children will find the environment of a larger school more challenging, both within and out of the classroom, and will respond accordingly. Certainly, when very small schools are combined, there are usually significant benefits to the educational and social development of the children.

And that has been accepted as a sound educational principle for some time.

Earlier, I spoke of the savings in staffing and operational costs which flow automatically from the introduction of a system in which schools are fully utilized by students to replace one providing for the maintenance of a series of empty or often unused rooms. I come now to the capital savings which will

also result as a matter of course. In the Territory, the closure of the 4 Band 3 schools alone will produce total savings of \$4.4m over the next 5 years. In capital terms, savings in repairs and maintenance alone will be \$331 000 at Traeger Park, \$1.48m at Karguru, \$899 000 at Tiwi and \$1.2m at Rapid Creek. These are not insignificant amounts in difficult economic times, especially when Territory students will maintain their access to the magnificent new facilities which have been built at a cost of \$42m since 1986. The government has not exactly been sitting on its hands. In his report, Hugh Hudson wrote:

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It is not possible to conclude that educational quality will be damaged by a school closure program. The quality of the receiving schools is well up to the normal high ACT standards. Nor is it possible to conclude that any of the schools proposed for closure are not good schools. The issue turns instead on how much extra per student is the community willing to pay to keep open the smaller schools and ensure the maintenance of educational standards.

In the political context, the only alternative to accepting the inevitability of school closures was put to the member for MacDonnell at the COGSO Conference last week. He was told by a delegate that he must immediately write 2 clauses into ALP policy: that the ALP agrees never to close a school; and, that on attaining office, it would immediately reopen those that we have targeted for closure. Of course, the opposition would do neither. It would be irresponsible to make such a commitment, and I am sure that the member for MacDonnell would say that the ALP would not be prepared to do that.

I turn now to the reductions in the student/teacher formula. These reductions are marginal. An overall result is shown clearly in a table circulated within the department's document outlining the proposed changes. Despite the changes, the Territory formula will remain the best in Australia in preschools. We will be behind only Tasmania and Victoria in our primary school formula. In primary schools, the Tasmanian formula is 21.2:1. In Victoria it is 21.5:1, and the new Northern Territory formula is 22:1, one extra student. The range in the other states runs from 22.1:1 to 26.2:1. In junior secondary, we will be behind the ACT but ahead of Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland, which range from 17.9:1 to 23.5:1. At the senior secondary level, we will maintain our position, second to the ACT, with a formula of 15:1, while the states range from 15:1 to 19.3:1. As this comparison indicates, we will maintain a very favourable staffing formula when compared with the states. The savings exceed \$9m and, as I have said, they offset the need to close further schools.

So far, I have been looking at the items within education on which public debate has focused. In fact, 13 different areas of rationalization were undertaken by the government in education. These included the establishment of the standard devolution package to schools and to TAFE, and I would have thought that the opposition would welcome this strategy since that very notion came from the schools themselves. As I have indicated, schools and respondent councils will have increased powers and responsibilities. Similarly, TAFE councils will take on further devolution of authority and decision-making.

In parallel with this, through the job evaluation system, the positions of school secretaries and registrars are being upgraded so that they will be paid commensurately with the taking on of all devolution responsibilities. This is an important point which I have asked school councils to note. School secretaries and registrars will be required to undertake the major part of any additional workload related to full devolution. It is important to understand that the process will be designed to provide school councils with the support they need to cope with the new issues which will arise. It is a positive step because, through

the devolution process, it is possible to decrease the bureaucracy. It eliminates the need to have people sitting in head office carrying out tasks that have become school-based.

In the past, barriers to full devolution have included the problem for small, remote, outback schools, and this will be resolved by providing for regional school councils, assisted by the regional office, or large hub

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schools in the case of remote Aboriginal schools. I would have thought that the members for Barkly and MacDonnell would have welcomed that strategy as handing control of their schools to the people in those communities. We hope all councils will take on the full devolution package. For those that have accepted the full range of powers which now apply, there is not likely to be a greatly increased workload. I recognize that some may not have the resources in their community to take on all of the tasks proposed and, where this is the case, councils may still opt for part of the total devolution package, with the responsibility for implementation of the remainder lying with the principal.

I want to stress that no school will have devolution foisted on it. There is a matter of choice at the end of the day. Financial guidelines for principals will be adjusted accordingly. Key features of the new package will be that schools and colleges will be provided with 1-line budgets. Again, I would have expected opposition members to applaud that strategy. Schools will be able to deal directly with private sector suppliers, working from government contract prices for all school supplies.

Following the success of a number of schools in managing large capital works projects, the government has agreed that all capital works projects may be handled by school councils, another strategy that has been welcomed by school communities. Perhaps the most important provisions relate to staffing. Relief teacher funding will be allocated on a financial grant basis and will include an incentive component following the Tasmanian scheme. This means that, if schools do not use the full relief teacher allocation, then the funds can be used for other purposes. Conversely, if a school over expends its relief teacher funding, it will have to find funds for further relief teaching from elsewhere within its grant. Clearly, if there is an epidemic or some unforeseen circumstances arise, there is provision for the school funding allocation to be reviewed.

Mr Bailey: That is sick.

Mr STONE: The member for Wanguri says that that is sick. It would appear that he does not have my confidence in the ability of school councils to manage their affairs.

Another issue of major importance to the ERC was the rationalization of administrative processes, to which I have referred already during these sittings. The central office of the department has had to bear the biggest burden in cost reductions. I know that this is a matter of some contention among members opposite but it is a fact. We will be privatizing supply and introducing an integrated personnel system. Risk management will be introduced into accounts processing. None of these measures will provide less of a service and, in the long run, these services should be quicker, simpler and more efficient. Hand in hand with that, greater decision-making powers will be devolved to superintendents. No longer will my desk be the destination of documentation to appoint a part-time janitor at Yuendumu. That should be dealt with at the local level, and it will be.

Another initiative of the ERC is the introduction of full cost recovery for non-compulsory, recreation and general enrichment courses. There is also the implementation of fees and charges for adults enrolled in the school system, such fees to be comparable to those applying to similar courses in the TAFE system. The only effect of this measure on schools will be that a standard scale of fees will apply to adults enrolled in evening courses at secondary colleges. The process of bringing charges into line with TAFE courses has begun already at Casuarina Secondary College and is

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working very well. In this way, courses which might otherwise not have continued will be able to proceed.

Students are to be encouraged to study within the Northern Territory. Several programs which dealt with the remoteness of the Territory at the time of self-government now have the opposite effect to that intended at the time and, in fact, reduce the opportunities available to Territory students. We intend to phase them out. Persons covered by any of these schemes at present will continue, but there will be no new entrants. Air fares aside, Territorians spend more than \$6m a year being educated outside the Territory. This strategy will seek to return some of those students to the excellent facilities now available to them at home. I would have thought that that proposal would have been welcomed by members opposite.

A not unrelated initiative is the establishment of a task force to look at the privatization of Yirara College. The privatization of Kormilda has been outstandingly successful. A task force is now being established to look at how, in the southern region of the Northern Territory, Yirara College could be redeveloped as an autonomous non-government institution. I have to stress that this initiative came from the college. If the task force reports that it is not a worthwhile proposition, the government will consider that at the time.

Finally, I believe that there has been a great deal of misinformation, or certainly misunderstanding, in relation to the composition of, structure of and results achieved by the ministerial task force which investigated the utilization of school facilities. The government did not operate in a vacuum in developing the strategies in education which are being introduced through the ERC.

Through its Chairman, Richard Creswick, COGSO's input in the process has been significant. The shape and substance of many of the changes in education were altered by the ministerial task force. For their hard work as members of the task force, it is appropriate that I extend the thanks of this government to Richard Creswick, and former president and life member of COGSO, Ian Pontifex. Theirs was not an easy task. The government sought to close 10 schools and relocate 5 preschools. Instead, based on the recommendations of the task force, 8 schools will close and 2 preschools will be relocated.

To pick up an interjection made earlier this morning in relation to Millner and Rapid Creek Primary Schools, it was the recommendation of government that Millner Primary School should close. However, the task force recommended the closure of Rapid Creek Primary School. As I said at the time, it would have been quite improper for government to politicize the process and interfere in the recommendations of the task force. The task force has had a significant impact on the outcome of the ERC process in relation to education. That impact was demonstrated clearly in a newsletter issued after the ERC findings by the principal and school council chairperson of Wagaman Primary School, which was on the list of proposed closures put forward by the Department of Education, but overturned by the task force.

The composition of the ministerial task force was based closely on the guidelines which have been in school handbooks since 1986. Let me stress that they are guidelines only and do not have the force of law. They are now some 5 or 6 years old and are open to reassessment and review. I believe that it is significant that the major difference between the task force proposed in the guidelines and the task force which reported to the

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ERC was the provision of an additional parent representative. The guidelines called for only 1 such representative but this task force had 2. It conducted a thorough program of consultation, given the need to keep the period of uncertainty for school communities to a minimum. Another significant point is that the task force time frame of consultation was actually reduced after discussions with the President of COGSO in which it was agreed that it would be a useful exercise if the recommendations of the task force were made known prior to the COGSO conference so that they could be the subject of full and frank discussion.

I fully realize that there will be those who strongly oppose many of the government's decisions. Organized campaigns to reverse government decisions in the states have not been successful. If there is one thing on which all education ministers in Australia agree, whether they be ALP, Liberal or CLP, it is that they will stand firm on such matters. Continued opposition will achieve nothing more than a reduction in teacher morale and the alienation of the school system, with the real losers being the children as they become the pawns in the political brawling between the various groups with an interest in the matter. At the end of the day, the Territory will retain one of the best staffed and resourced education systems in Australia. More than that, it will have an education system in which every division, unit and school serves the community in the most effective manner, whether one's terms of reference be education or economics.

For the record, there seems to be some confusion on the part of the member for MacDonnell as to what the COGSO representative on the task force supported or did not support. I can make available to him a copy of the task force report. It is quite clear - and, in my meeting with the task force, I clarified this for myself - that it recommended closure of 4 of the 8 schools, taking issue only in relation to Tiwi, Karguru, Rapid Creek and Traeger Park. The decision in respect of the other schools was unanimous.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, I apologies to the Chair for my emotional outburst earlier this morning in relation to this issue. However, we members of the opposition found it very difficult to contain our emotions when we listened to the deceit, the dishonesty and the arrogance of the minister in relation to this subject. We heard him deliver his prepared speech ...

Mr SETTER: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! The member referred to the lies, deceit and dishonesty of the Minister for Education.

Mr Bailey: I did not say lies.

Mr SETTER: Well, deceit and dishonesty.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, we have sat in this House and listened to the deceit, the dishonesty and the arrogance of the Minister for Education. We have also heard it outside the House over the last 4 to 6 weeks.

My initial interest in becoming involved directly in the issue of school closures resulted from the very first piece of deceit involved in this process. There was an interesting letter to the editor from a Mr Roy Turner, before school closures were even on the agenda, suggesting that we should close Millner and Tiwi Primary Schools. Interestingly enough, those were 2 schools that the department was suggesting should be closed at that time. That was before the report was made public. It was a

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deceitful letter because that person does not exist. The address given does not exist. In fact, the suggestion is that the honourable minister may know who 'Roy Turner' is. Indeed, reputedly, 'Roy Turner' is a member of his staff.

Since then, we have continued to hear a litany of lies and deceit. Over and over again, the minister spoke today about the task force being established for the benefit of Territorians and in the interests of doing it the right way. He said the COGSO representatives on that task force agreed with the recommendations. The honourable minister knows that the President of COGSO did not recommend the closure of any of the 4 major urban primary schools. In fact, the other member, who was appointed by the minister, did not recommend the closure of either Karguru or Tiwi.

Mr Stone interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: Do you want to do that? You censure me. You present the dissenting report and its recommendations and I will withdraw that.

Mr Stone: It is available. It will be circulated to anyone who asks.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Speaker, it is quite clear that the minister has continued to mislead this Assembly in relation to the way the task force was established. He tried to make it appear that the task force justified the school closures. In fact, what we had were 3 Department of Education members who were there to look at a Department of Education recommendation. They were not given the ability to decide on which schools should close or remain open or even to make recommendations in relation to that. They could work only from the report prepared under the direction of the Department of Education and the minister. They did not have a free rein in terms of which schools to visit. For example, they were not permitted to go to Larrakeyah. It was not on the list of schools which they could visit. Why? Because it is in the minister's electorate. We hear the honourable minister ask how on earth the opposition can suggest that the school closure agenda had anything to do with politics.

In its original report to the ERC, the Department of Education listed Millner Primary School as one of the schools to be closed. However, this recommendation was ignored by the government's own task force. The department had made a recommendation to close Millner Primary School when it knew that such a closure could not be justified on any but political grounds. The department then had to accept the reality that the task force ...

Mr Reed: So the department conducted itself politically, did it?

Mr BAILEY: The department is used politically all the time.

Mr Reed: I just wanted to make sure. You have clarified it now. Thank you very much.

Mr BAILEY: For example, prior to the demonstration, the Secretary of the Department of Education sent a letter to schools informing them that they were not allowed to do anything which might indicate any objection to the minister's efforts to close them down.

Mr Stone: Tell the truth.

Mr Reed: Show us the letter.

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Mr Finch interjecting.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member will be heard in silence.

Mr BAILEY: I draw the honourable minister's attention to a document entitled 'Ministerial Task Force Report on the Use of Government School Facilities'. He may be familiar with the title although I do not think that he has read the contents. At page 13, in relation to recommendation 14, we see that there was a majority recommendation that Tiwi Primary School and Tiwi Preschool be closed with effect from the end of the 1991 school year. I draw the minister's attention to the very next paragraph. 'The minority view (Creswick and Pontifex) is that Tiwi School should remain open'.

Mr Stone: Say that again.

Mr BAILEY: It is at page 13. Has the department given you a different version? Is that the same report as the one that told you that the department had only 10 superintendents, not 17? Perhaps we should refer to the honourable minister as the minister for mushrooms because, Mr Deputy Speaker, his department has been feeding him the biggest load of manure imaginable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to table the minister's own document so that he may read it.

Leave granted.

Mr BAILEY: Once again, the minister has proved his incompetence by not even reading his own document. He proved it yesterday when, in response to a dorothy dixer, he demonstrated his lack of knowledge of his department when he tried to suggest that it has 10 superintendents although its own telephone directory lists 17. He also forgot to mention the large number of directors and assistant secretaries.

Mr Manzie: That listing has not changed for 5 years.

Mr BAILEY: I am talking about the 1990-91 listing. I am quite happy for the minister to correct me if I am wrong, but I am sure that the end result of such an attempt would be another apology from him.

Although the task force comprised 5 members, one of them being the President of COGSO, it should be noted that the other so-called parent representative was not selected by COGSO. He was not on the task force to represent COGSO; he was another ministerial appointee.

Mr Hatton: Are you impugning his character?

Mr BAILEY: I am not impugning his character. However, if the minister wants to claim that he represented COGSO, I would suggest that the minister should have gone to COGSO and asked it to appoint another representative rather than selecting someone without making any reference to it.

The government has shown arrogance and dishonesty throughout this whole exercise. Before lunch, we heard the honourable minister deliver his prepared speech. We all know what he did before he came here. He was a person who was paid to produce speeches, whether he believed in their content or not. He tried to deliver his speech with feeling. He tried to

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make it sound as though he, as minister, really cared about what happened to children in the Northern Territory. I bring to the attention of honourable members the type of letter that he was sending out to parents whose children would have to move because of school closures. The letter contained statements such as 'the Chief Minister announced a range of measures', 'as a nation we are in a severe depression', 'we will, as a government, fail in our responsibility' and 'education has not been exempt from the rationalization process, and we must pull our weight and shoulder our share of the burden' - as will all of the government backbenchers with their extra \$8000 to \$12 000! It is hard to share the burden around here. The letter went on to state: 'The decisions for closure of these Territory schools were based on recommendations made by a task force which included parent representatives'. Lies, Mr Deputy Speaker! The minister knew that both parents on that board did not recommend the closure of Tiwi Primary School. The minister lies to the people of the Northern Territory, and he continues to lie within the House.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last statement.

Mr BAILEY: Which part of it?

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: All of it relating to lies within the House.

Mr BELL: May I speak to the point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker?

Mr Vale: The ruling has already been made.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, I do not want to disturb the debate by moving dissent from the Chair, but

the honourable member is speaking to a substantive motion. He is allowed to make allegations like that and to debate them.

Mr Hatton: He is not allowed to use unparliamentary language.

Mr BELL: The forms of the House are there, and I do not believe there is a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr BAILEY: He lied to the people of the Northern Territory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have ruled that the member will withdraw the words under Standing Order 62, which relates to the use of unparliamentary words that are offensive to a member. He accused the minister of lying in the House.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I withdraw the reference to the minister lying. However, I bring to the attention of the House the fact that, recently, I tabled a document relating to the task force which suggested that parent members did not recommend that Tiwi Primary School be closed. I recall that the minister interjected that that was a load of rubbish. I would be quite happy for him to rise and state that he misunderstood the document from his own task force to the point of giving a wrong impression. I repeat that he has lied in this document that he sent out to parents of children at Tiwi Primary School.

The whole exercise has been one of trying to con the people of the Northern Territory into believing that, in some way, the closure of these

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schools is justified and that 4 schools and the disruption to the lives of about 1000 children are worth the piddling savings that his department will achieve. The Department of Education has 1 secretary, 3 deputy secretaries, 3 assistant secretaries, 10 directors and 17 superintendents and, as I said this morning, let us see how that compares with the situation in Tasmania, which has a larger population than ours. Where we have those 34 senior people, Tasmania has 22. The minister stated that Tasmania has 3 deputy secretaries. However, he failed to take into account that they also have responsibilities for museums and libraries. This morning, the minister said that the government is really slashing executive and organizational positions within the Department of Education and getting rid of 175 teacher positions. At the same time, he said that the government was not getting rid of any teachers and that the reduction would occur by means of natural attrition. I would like to know how the honourable minister intends to explain the situation to a class when the students are waiting for their teacher to come in. Will he say to them, 'I am sorry, but your teacher was "naturally attritioned" today'?

Mr Stone: Over 300 leave every year anyway.

Mr BAILEY: But, until now, you have replaced them, you dill! You are saying that no jobs have gone. You are saying that, if you get rid of 175 teachers through natural attrition, nothing has changed. You still need teachers in front of classes. Or has your department been telling you that you can get rid of 175 teachers without some classes not being covered? He went on to say that we should forget about the 175 teachers who will disappear through natural attrition. That means their positions will not be refilled. There will be 175 fewer teachers. Is it too difficult to get that through your thick skull? It means that you will have to

disband 175 classes and move the students into other classes because you will no longer have sufficient teachers.

I would like to see where the ministerial offices, departments and other areas have taken their fair share of cuts. Let us look at the executive cuts that are set to occur over the next few years. We will rationalize curriculum development in advisory positions and student services. That is one of the few administrative areas which actually do things for schools. It tries to help teachers, promote various curriculums and supply specialist people such as guidance officers and special education advisers. The minister says that, eventually, we will save 50 positions in the rationalization of the administrative process. He does not mean that we will rationalize the administrative process. Through computerization and other means, we will get rid of a number of people who work on the processing of salaries and on organization. We will not actually get rid of any of the administration. The fat in the system will remain, and the minister sits there with his bloated ego and arrogance saying: 'We are all tightening our belts'. Rubbish! The people of the Northern Territory know that the arrogant minister sitting over there is quite happy to see 5- to 7-year-olds trying to cross 4-lane main roads.

Mr Hatton: Good emotive stuff.

Mr BAILEY: Do you want some figures?

Mr Stone: Yes. Let's have your figures.

Mr BAILEY: Will the minister dispute that the projections of savings per student by the closure of Tiwi and Traeger Park Primary Schools are in the \$700 to \$1000 range whereas, as a result of the closure of a number of

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other schools, the savings per student would be in excess of \$2000. The difference is that the latter were in CLP electorates such as that of the Leader of Government Business. Ask him how much would have been saved by closing some of the schools in his electorate?

Mr Stone: You want to close Wagaman, do you?

Mr BAILEY: No. I do not want to close any schools. I am not two-faced.

Mr Stone: Is that ALP policy?

Mr BAILEY: I do not want to close Wagaman School.

Mr Speaker, even their own document indicates that there are appropriate times to close schools. We have no objections to at least 3 of the schools that are being suggested for closure.

Mr Stone: Which 3?

Mr BAILEY: Warrego, Kiana - and, whilst talking about Kiana, it will be interesting to hear the honourable

minister comment on the \$10 000 upgrade which was gazetted about 2 weeks before the decision was made to close the school. What efficient organization!

Mr Stone: We did not pre-empt anything.

Mr Reed: Which is the third?

Mr BAILEY: Berrimah Preschool.

We are aware of the arguments in relation to the closure of schools and we believe there are circumstances in which such closures can be justified. However, these do not include an unwillingness to trim the fat elsewhere in the education system. Even the elimination of the public relations section of the Department of Education would make sufficient savings to avoid the need for school closures.

The minister's department issued a circular - which he says is no longer valid - on guidelines for school closures.

Mr Stone: I did not say that.

Mr BAILEY: The guidelines say that closures are appropriate when schools can no longer provide adequate **educational** programs. Tiwi, Rapid Creek, Karguru and Traeger Park Primary Schools were all providing adequate programs, as was stated by Mr Fong, a departmental member of the task force, when he visited Tiwi Primary School. He said that all of the threatened schools were providing educational programs which were the equal of those in any other school in the Northern Territory and he admitted that he had no hard evidence of any savings that would be gained by closing any of those schools. In conclusion, I challenge the minister to take responsibility for the detrimental effects of school closures on the children presently attending those schools.

Mr MANZIE (Attorney-General): Mr Speaker, given that the member for Wanguri professes to have been a psychologist, I find his methods of persuasion quite surprising. His concept of winning an argument seems to be that he who shouts loudest shall score the most points. The trouble is that

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the garbage that he throws across the Chamber is completely devoid of logical argument. We have not heard a single sensible argument in relation to the requirement to rationalize expenditure and how best to go about that task. I thought that that was what this debate was about. We are debating a censure motion which contains 4 points, but the member for Wanguri did not address any of them. For the Deputy Leader of the Labor Opposition in this House, it was a most inept performance. However, we are becoming used to that.

We need to see this subject in the context of the total economic environment. I am talking about Australia's economic position after 8 years of Australian Labor Party control of this country. The country is in a pitiful situation and the member opposite would do well to think about the policies which have led to this, not only in the Territory but throughout the whole country. He should be ashamed to associate himself with such policies. He has the audacity to tell his constituents that it is terrible of the Northern

Territory government to decide to close a school, when the truth of the matter is that the policies of the ALP have destroyed the economy of this country and the quality of life of ordinary Australians. As a result, Labor is trying slowly to destroy the quality of education across the country.

During the 8 years of Labor power in Canberra, what type of support have we received from the members opposite? We have seen the application of anti-development policies in this country - an approach which involved no timber industry, no dams, no uranium mining, many more national parks but no mining in national parks, the widespread granting of land rights, sacred sites legislation, higher interest rates, and destructive taxes which destroy incentives, close down businesses and eliminate jobs. We have seen this country go downhill to such an extent that, in all Labor states, the states whose policies the member for Wanguri supports, Departments of Education have been required to do much more than merely to tighten their belts. They have had to slash expenditure to the bone.

It is worth while contemplating what is happening in the Australian states as a result of the policies this country has had to operate under for the last 8 years, remembering where we have come from and where we are now. The Department of Education in Tasmania has been forced to reduce overall staffing by 1056 or 16% in a recent cost-cutting exercise. The cut in teaching staff was 13%, and teachers salaries in Tasmania are now the lowest in Australia by far. Perhaps the member for Wanguri would like to see us operate along the lines of the Labor government in Tasmania, and cut education by 16% instead of 5%. Is that what he is trying to say?

Mr Bailey: God, you are a dill.

Mr MANZIE: There is another example of the member for Wanguri's intelligent debating skills. He resorts to abusing people. He continually abused the Minister for Education, using such brilliant expressions as 'dill' and 'fool'. That demonstrates the level of his intelligence and it is typical of his contributions in this House. During these sittings, we have heard the phrase 'Eddie the Eagle' used. I think that everyone knows about the contribution made by Eddie the Eagle to sport, in world terms. The member for Wanguri is making a similar contribution to politics in the Territory.

Let us have a look at what has happened in another Labor state as a result of the ALP's national policies. Victoria has reduced education staffing levels by 1200 teaching jobs. Isn't that interesting? We did not

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hear much about that from the member for Wanguri. South Australia has reduced its teaching numbers by 800, and has closed down schools. In the national environment in which we are forced to operate, the federal policies espoused by the member for Wanguri block every initiative to create employment and wealth. He should remember that when he talks to his constituents. No doubt, he says to them: 'This has been brought about because of policies which I stand for, but don't worry about it. If we get in, we will charge you more taxes. We will fix it up for you'. His attitude is despicable.

In the Northern Territory, we are talking about a 5% cut. That is much less than has occurred anywhere else. Let us look at the conduct of this process. We must be aware of the concerns which always arise in the community when cuts are made to government services. Of course, cuts to school services always cause a great deal of emotion. There are 2 factors which must be considered. One is the emotional environment and the other is people - children, parents and teachers. We have also to consider quality

and standards in the provision of **education** services and the ability of all Territorians to have access to high-quality services.

The emotional distress caused by school closures is very real. Inevitably, parents and teachers will be upset by changes in the way things occur. However, if the member for Wanguri has retained even 1% of the knowledge he gained in his psychology studies, he would realize that people suffering distress as a result of change require considerable support. They have to make a decision in relation to what has occurred and then take positive steps to face the change and to make the best of the situation. The member for Wanguri knows that distress and emotional problems are only compounded when people are given false information and false hope. I notice that the member for Wanguri has now left the Chamber. The issue is so important to him that he cannot be bothered to stay for the debate. That is how much he cares for his constituents and the school which he is supposed to be representing. He cannot be bothered to stay in the Chamber. That is absolutely pathetic.

The member for Wanguri has made claims, in letters and the news media, that Tiwi Primary School is to become a psychiatric centre. Actually, I had not thought about that. Perhaps he is trying to look after some of his mates in the psychology industry. On reflection, it is not such a crazy idea. As I said in debate yesterday ...

Mr BAILEY: A point of order, Mr Speaker! The honourable minister has now twice implied that he was not aware of this recommendation prior to seeing it in my newsletter. I believe that he is misleading the House.

Mr SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr MANZIE: I have referred the member for Wanguri's suggestion to my department because, in the course of his scaremongering, he may have come up with an idea that may save the taxpayers some money.

Mr Bailey: God, you are a low life.

Mr MANZIE: We will see what results after some expert investigation.

The member for Wanguri contributed in the debate with his normal level of intelligence, great command of the English language and judicious use of adjectives. It really is an eye-opener for all concerned.

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Let us look at the motion. It refers to a lack of consultation: 'failing to consult with parents, teachers and the community about the closure of 11 pre and primary schools'. A process has been set down as a result of the closure of schools in Darwin. Let it be remembered that it has happened in 2 instances in the past - in relation to Darwin Primary School and Berrimah Primary School. As a result of those closures, we did not see any mass sacking of teachers. No deterioration occurred in the standard of education and there was no fall in the quality of education. A little extra money was available to be spread around a few more schools, but the roof did not fall in and people are better off today because of it.

As a result of those closures, a process was set in train. The consultation process was laid out. As a result of that, the ministerial task force looked at the whole situation.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Wanguri does not like the idea that people were involved in discussions, examined the detail and made recommendations. Those people included 2 parent representatives. In relation to the Tiwi Primary School, both those parent representatives dissented from the terms of the recommendation, which was their right and the right of anyone else on the task force. In relation to the recommendation on Rapid Creek Primary School, only 1 parent representative dissented.

Mr Bailey interjecting.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Wanguri cannot keep his mouth closed. He has had a chance, but he still wants to throw in his 2-bob's worth. He stood in the House and said that the COGSO representatives disagreed with these, and that is not the case. Both representatives dissented in respect of Tiwi Primary School and 1 dissented in respect of Rapid Creek Primary School. As I said, there was no necessity for all members of the task force to agree. However, they had the ability to work through the process and make recommendations. They had the ability to register dissent, and it has been recorded.

The process is open and aboveboard. The consultation process was set in train and it was complied with. On top of that, the minister wrote to the parents and, I believe, the teachers at the schools concerned. As well, the Secretary of the Department of Education corresponded with the parents, the teachers and the staff. In addition, visits were made by the minister and by the task force.

Mr Stone: And communicated with the parents.

Mr MANZIE: Yes. There has been extensive documentation of the consultation which was carried out in accordance with formal process. The member for Wanguri has not been in the Territory very long.

Mr Bailey: Longer than the minister has.

Mr MANZIE: But he has not bothered even to find out what happened, because that might hurt his style. He would not be able simply to stand up and say what he feels like saying without any reference to facts. He is good at that, but he cannot get away with it any longer because he is not a practising psychologist now. He is the Deputy Leader of the parliamentary wing of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party in the parliament. He has to stick to the facts because, if he does not, he will

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be attacked in here, not for what he says, but for what he leaves out. That is the truth and it is a bit of a shame. I hope that he will pull his socks up because he has an important role and he should rise to the occasion.

Mr Bailey: Being patronising does not help, Daryl.

Mr MANZIE: I do not know what helps, but he needs some help somewhere along the line, Mr Speaker. I suppose we should all help him a bit.

It is clear that the consultation process was carried out very effectively, and that is contrary to the first point in this censure motion. The second point refers to the 'distress caused to students and their parents by the closure of 11 pre and primary schools'. As I said earlier, distress and emotional feelings result when change is required in anyone's circumstances. In relation to schools and young people, it is extremely difficult, and we recognize that problem. We have a process in train to try to alleviate that as much as possible.

The member for Wanguri and other members opposite could play a part in trying to alleviate as much of the stress and emotion as possible but, for political purposes the member for Wanguri would rather create greater stress and greater emotional problems. The problem there is that it affects young children. Any attempt by anyone to try to create greater stress and greater emotional problems for young children is to be deplored. I ask the member for Wanguri to do the best he can, for the benefit of the people concerned, to make this whole process work much more smoothly. We are not even talking about vast changes, and it is worth while keeping this in context.

Paragraph 3 of the motion refers to 'compromising the quality of education of Territory children for short-term cost savings'. There has been no evidence of a compromise on the quality of education. There has been ...

Mr Bailey: There has not been any evidence of cost savings either.

Mr MANZIE: The member for Wanguri is still babbling on over there. I suppose that it is pretty hard for him to listen and absorb information when he is talking himself. Perhaps that is his secret. That may be the way he manages to preserve his blissful ignorance - he simply closes his ears and opens his mouth. It would help if he did take in a bit of information because then he might be able to contribute a little better and he might be able to inform his constituents a little better.

Let us come back to the quality of education. Questions were asked of the minister this morning and he stated quite clearly that the educational programs referred to at the schools to be closed would be moved to other schools. Opportunities will be available for the students presently doing those courses to continue with them. The minister talked about languages and music. It is important to point out that all schools in the Territory provide great opportunities for language and music courses.

Mr Bailey: Rubbish! Some schools do not offer language courses at all.

Mr MANZIE: Some schools operate a more detailed program in relation to languages other than English, music and other specialized areas. Those programs that are additional to the normal curriculum in the schools that are being closed will not be lost. They will be transferred to other schools that the students will be attending.

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Let us have a look at the situation confronting us. Tiwi Primary School has a capacity of 510 and an enrolment of 178. Rapid Creek Primary School has a capacity of 420 and an enrolment of 176. Karguru

Primary School has a capacity of 480 and Tennant Creek Primary School a capacity of 500, yet their combined enrolment is 380. Traeger Park Primary School has a capacity of 510 and an enrolment of 144. If the member for Wanguri does not accept that 170 enrolments in a school that has a capacity of 510 does not utilize that resource properly, what would he say if it were 100 students or 50 students? When would he say that ...

Mr Bailey: The department people said they were offering an education program of a quality as good as that available anywhere.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Wanguri that he has had 2 warnings today. If he persists, he will be named.

Mr MANZIE: Would he say that 10 students is an appropriate enrolment for the closure of a school? Will he give a figure? Does he believe that there should be no figure and that, as long as there is one student attending a school, it should be kept open?

I am disappointed that the member for Wanguri has left the Chamber again. I am sure that he feels that he is representing his constituents in a full and frank way, but I find it very disappointing. They probably will too, when they learn that he has spent more of his time during this debate out of the Chamber than in it.

As well as the low enrolment numbers, we should look at the location of the schools. The distance in a straight line from Tiwi Primary School to Wanguri Primary School is 900 m. The direct distance from Tiwi Primary School to Nakara Primary School is 600 m. That puts the problems we are talking about into better perspective. We are talking about large premises which are greatly under-utilized. We are talking about a choice for students to make between a school which is 600 m from the present school and one which is 900 m from the present school. Rapid Creek Primary School is situated 800 m from Nightcliff Primary School and 1005 m from the Millner Primary School. Again, its capacity in relation to its enrolment is very relevant.

This is not an easy exercise. It cannot be undertaken without a great deal of stress and trauma. As has been evident from happenings elsewhere in the country, a series of steps have to be taken. The environment which requires such steps has been brought about by ALP policies which have destroyed this country economically. They are still destroying it. The process is being carried out by the Minister for **Education** in a most effective way, with all possible consultation and with great awareness of the emotional distress that this type of change will cause.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I wish to move an amendment to the motion.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr SETTER: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the honourable minister be granted an extension of time.

Motion agreed to.

Mr MANZIE: Mr Deputy Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by omitting all words after 'that' and inserting in their stead: 'this Assembly commends the Minister for Education for -

- (1) establishing a task force to consult with principals, school councils, parents and the community about the closure of 8 pre and primary schools;
- (2) alleviating the distress caused to students and parents by personal communication with parents and ensuring that action is in hand to provide all programs at receiving schools and allowing schools and parents until the end of 1991 to make the arrangements necessary for their children for 1992;
- (3) ensuring the quality of education for all Territory children; and
- (4) for making the highest proportion of reductions outside the school fence.

I have spoken about all the items except item No 4, which relates to 'making the highest proportion of reductions outside the school fence'. The total staff of the Department of Education, comprising those in schools, colleges, educational support services and corporate administrative services, is 4187. In percentage terms, the changes relate to a 5% cut within the schools and colleges, an 11% cut in educational support services and a 15.9% cut in corporate administrative services. That puts to rest the false claim that everything is occurring in the schools and nothing is occurring in the administrative area. In fact, the greatest proportion of the cuts is occurring in that administrative area.

No government is pleased about having to undertake such a process. However, there is no doubt that the Territory government has to undergo this process even though we have been able to do it to a far lesser extent than has been required in some states. It has been forced on us, and the minister has done the job in a most commendable way. It was not an easy job. I ask that members opposite support the changes if for one reason only, and that is to alleviate the distress that has resulted from this process of change.

Mrs HICKEY (Barkly): Mr Deputy Speaker, I certainly cannot support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General. The Minister for Education stands condemned by Territorians and by this opposition in that, in the short 6 months that he has held this portfolio, he has set back education in the Territory by 2 decades. Later, I will refer to Territory-wide issues and will talk about how the master teachers program is being altered. I will be talking about devolution of responsibilities to schools and how that disadvantages small schools. I will be talking about the way in which this inefficient and dishonest CLP government has been leaning on Commonwealth funding in order to bail itself out of the problems in which it has found itself. However, let me refer first to the Tennant Creek situation.

In the light of the amendment that the Attorney-General has moved, I am unsure whether I should refer to the Karguru closure or Karguru relocation. Let me set out a brief history of the Tennant Creek schools because it is very interesting. The CLP government has had carriage of education in the Territory for the years in which this interesting scenario has developed. The original building in Paterson Street was designed for Years 1 to 8 and a preschool was built on the same campus, adjoining the school. Eventually,

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this became an area school catering for Years 1 to 10. As the town grew, the community lobbied for a new primary school. The primary school was the result of work from people in the community who saw it develop from an idea into a great school when it opened 15 years ago.

Karguru Primary School and Preschool were built and opened in 1976. The preschool actually started operation in the second half of 1975 for students on the east side of town from transition to Year 5. Year 6 was retained at the area school. A new double storey facility was built on the campus of the area school to cater for the growing number of secondary students in home economics, woodwork, technical drawing etc. We must remember that this was built for secondary school children. After a number of years as part of the area school, Year 6 eventually moved to Karguru. However, as a result of the expanding numbers of young families, Karguru became overcrowded and it was decided to establish a primary school on the area school campus. At its conception, it was intended that that should be a temporary arrangement. That school came into being in 1982, catering for Years 1 to 4 and mainly for children from the west side of the town so that they would not be required to cross a major highway.

Tennant Creek Area School became a high school in the early 1980s, catering for students from Year 7 through to Year 10 and, eventually, Tennant Creek Primary School grew to include Year 6. In 1986, a new high school was built and opened, leaving the campus in Paterson Street vacant. The TAFE Open College and the Barkly Education Centre were centred on that campus. Thus, at the moment, we have the Tennant Creek Primary School, the Barkly Education Centre, an Aboriginal transition unit which has been recently opened there, and the TAFE campus, all in the old area school location.

The minister flew into Tennant Creek unannounced. Actually, I was at the airport and I was as surprised to see him as probably he was to see me. He did not let anybody know he was coming, and I think he stands condemned for that also.

Mr Perron: Whom are we supposed to ask permission from to go to Tennant Creek?

Mrs HICKEY: The minister is not an old-fashioned school inspector who flies in to check on whether the teachers have their pencils sharpened. He is the minister representing Territorians and their hopes and aspirations for children in the Territory. Surely, when he visits schools, he should have the courtesy to announce that he is coming so that people have the opportunity to consult with him and speak to him about their educational aspirations. This was not done. His task force also arrived during the school holidays - a very convenient time. It is much easier to consider closing schools when there are no kids around.

Let me reiterate what my colleagues have said: the COGSO representation on the task force totally and consistently opposed the closure of Karguru Primary School. As a result of the deliberations of the task force, it was decided that Karguru should be closed. We are embarking now on a game of musical schools. When the music stops, we all move around one. Karguru goes to Tennant Creek Primary School and the regional office goes to Tennant Creek Primary School. There is not enough room and therefore we will have to move NTOC out. It is the odd man out and it will not have a position. We will return to the issue of adult education and NTOC later because that is a very interesting one.

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What is the rationale for the closure of Karguru - a move opposed by COGSO and rejected by parents from both the Tennant Creek Primary School and Karguru? Where are the savings? I invite the minister to elaborate on any savings that he will make in terms of removing this school. The removal of the TAFE component to new buildings, with all the costs involved for adaptation, will have to be borne by the

taxpayer. Too, there will be a need to make significant improvements in school crossing areas because the Karguru kids will now have to cross a major highway. There will be a need to upgrade the Tennant Creek Primary School, particularly the area that TAFE now occupies. Already, that area has been adapted, at considerable cost, to make it suitable for adult education and now it will have to be changed back to a primary school format. This area of the campus has a double storey building which has poor stairwells and unsafe verandahs, and it is unsafe for primary students.

In his costing, did the minister use the excuse of air-conditioning upgrading as a means of justifying the closure? I think we have the answer in the letter that he wrote to students at the school:

Another issue at Tennant Creek is that the large cost of installing refrigerated air-conditioning at Karguru Primary School was also taken into account. It is worth noting that, in proceeding to close Karguru Primary as part of changes at Tennant Creek, more than \$2.3m will be saved in salaries, operational costs, and repairs and maintenance over the next 5 years.

The aspect of air-conditioning interests parents and teachers at the Karguru Primary School. The minister had never undertaken to replace the air-conditioning or even to upgrade the air-conditioning. How he can justify this as a saving when he had never given any undertaking to replace or upgrade is a question asked by people in the community. There are cheaper options. The parents and teachers at Karguru Primary School have put those before the minister but they do not appear to be receiving any consideration.

I will return now to the TAFE college. Magically, we read in the latest edition of the 'Tennant and District Times' that Karguru is to be earmarked for redevelopment as Tennant Creek's first dedicated TAFE campus under a proposal being put to the federal government by the Minister for Education, Mr Shane Stone. Honourable members will notice that the proposal has not actually been put. It is 'being put'. However, the decision has been taken already that it is to happen.

This valuable institution services the Barkly and, by its own initiative and innovation, has expanded its operation over the last few years. It has rooms at the old area school. It has acquired the Fadelli facility. It runs adult education courses. It runs Aboriginal women's craft programs and many courses for Aboriginal people. It is obviously a necessary adjunct to education in the Barkly and yet this facility was threatened not with relocation, in the first place, but with closure. People working and using this facility were threatened with its closure. No wonder they are being forced into considering the option of moving to Karguru which is a dedicated primary school, an open-classroom facility and totally unsuitable for adult **education** purposes unless it is redesigned considerably and unless the air-conditioning is changed.

Who is to pick up the tab? I guess the Minister for Education hopes that the federal government will do it. Ultimately, Mr Deputy Speaker, you and I and every other taxpayer in the Territory will have to pay for this

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game of musical education facilities that the minister has put in train. Let us be clear that staff and management want to stay put on their existing campus. They have been forced into considering this

option to prevent the dismantling of adult education in the Barkly.

I would like to return to the devolution of responsibilities to schools and speak of another school in my constituency - Ali Curung. This school is largely run by Aboriginal teachers and it has a non-Aboriginal principal. This is a community made up almost exclusively of Aboriginal people living a traditional lifestyle. Very few people in that community have expertise in higher education. They do not have means at their disposal to undertake devolution of responsibilities, and it is very difficult for that school to undertake those responsibilities.

Mr Stone: It is not compulsory. The principal can do it.

Mrs HICKEY: I take up the minister's interjection. The principal is already under considerable strain in running a school that is largely peopled by traditional Aboriginal people and Aboriginal teachers who are still finding their own feet in the education system.

Mr Stone: Don't you have confidence in the ability of Aboriginal people to run their own affairs?

Mrs HICKEY: I suggest that this school will find it very difficult to accept devolution of responsibilities and the principal will be put under further strain through having to adopt financial management as well as running the school and helping the Aboriginal teachers to fulfill their objectives. The teachers in this school have put it to me that they are very concerned about the devolution of responsibility within that school. They acknowledge that they have other priorities and other considerations to attend to. They are not interested in having their principal shuffled off to undertake jobs that the Department of Education should be doing.

I turn now to the master teachers. This area has caused many of my constituents considerable unrest and I hope that, over the forthcoming weeks, the Minister for Education will perhaps explain a little more fully how this is to work. The Master Teachers Scheme was a good one. Its aim was to enable good classroom teachers to remain in the classroom if they so desired and to recognize their skills in that role so that they were not forced to move into administrative or other roles. We have seen the dismantling of the positions of EOs in the **education** system and I ask who will now undertake the role of consultation and information. For example, Borroloola Primary School relied heavily on the services of the education officer from the Tennant Creek office. Is this function now to be taken up by master teachers and, if it is ...

Mr Perron: You keep telling us to cut the administrative areas and leave the teachers alone. You are saying now that we should not cut administration either.

Mrs HICKEY: In response to the Chief Minister, I do not want to take the teachers out of classrooms. Parents will not thank the Minister for Education if he takes master teachers out of classrooms. However, who will undertake the important role of education officers for remote area schools, which rely heavily on help and support from a central office? At the moment, the TAFE campus is located at the Tennant Creek campus area, but we are told that it is to be redeveloped. I hope that the minister has persuasive powers with the federal Minister for Education because, from the

federal government responsibility for more and more functions that the CLP should be taking on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I say that the Minister for Education stands condemned for dismantling the education system that we have enjoyed in the Territory and for setting this back several decades. I would like to conclude by quoting a Tennant Creek resident who probably finds herself in a very difficult position now. I refer to Kay Rose, the Chairman of the Barkly Open College. She has worked very hard to develop and to sustain the facility in the town and she is in the difficult position where she is trying to support both the Karguru School and the Open College:

'The community watched Karguru develop from an idea into a great school', said Kay Rose, who was one of the first to work at Karguru when it opened 15 years ago. 'It is a school that has been designed specifically for children as it is set away from highway traffic. Everything has been purpose-built to suit young children and the achievements are something to be proud of. It is a really beautiful school'.

Personally, I think that Karguru has attracted closure because it stood up on its hind legs and complained that the air-conditioning was not adequate. I think the Minister for Education has used this as an excuse to close that school. This is really not a good enough reason or excuse. It is not accepted by the children, the parents, the teachers or the community of Tennant Creek.

I have spoken specifically for my own electorate. I am sure that, in the course of these sittings, others will speak on behalf of the schools in their electorates and will indicate how this will impact on them.

Mr Coulter: You are being very parochial. Is that what you are referring to?

Mrs HICKEY: I am saying that this is an indication of what goes on. It is acknowledged that Warrego Primary School was to be closed anyway. COGSO agreed that that was the case, and the same is true of Kiarna and Ganjarani. There is no argument about those. If the Department of Education had been doing its job properly, those schools would have been closed anyway. I wonder at the logic of opening Kiana in the first place but, be that as it may, there is a logical explanation for what is to happen to those schools because they would have been closed anyway in the normal course of events. Karguru is a very different matter, as was acknowledged by the COGSO representatives on the task force.

Mr HATTON (Industries and Development): Mr Deputy Speaker, as honourable members must be aware; this debate is anything but easy for me to participate in given the circumstances of one of the schools within my own electorate. Nevertheless, I rise to oppose the motion moved by the opposition and to support the amendment moved by the Attorney-General. In doing that, I would like to address some of the issues raised by members of the opposition and the reasons why I think their motion is incorrect.

In particular, I would like to address some of the difficult circumstances that are confronting the people within my electorate, especially the school community of Rapid Creek. The proposed closure of that school is something that that I have personal feelings about, given the many years of involvement that I and my family have had with the school.

Each of my 4 children attended the Rapid Creek Preschool and Primary School. I live in the Rapid Creek community and the parents there are friends of mine. I have been working very hard for many years, particularly since I have been elected, on trying to ensure the continuation of Rapid Creek Primary School.

I was instrumental in the introduction of the Language Development Centre at Rapid Creek Primary School, the transference of the music program base at Rapid Creek, the Special School program at Rapid Creek and the upgrading of the buildings at the school. Indeed, I sought to have Rapid Creek Primary School developed as a model school program which would produce educational models. It is sad for me to see the closure of that school. It is sad also for the dedicated and involved community of teachers and parents who have worked so hard over so many years to keep the school alive in the face of a clearly declining school population. It is one of the conflicts that face us all. As is the case perhaps with Tiwi Primary School also, the cloud of closure has been over the head of Rapid Creek Primary School for the last 6 years. Despite the fact that the school community has fought hard to develop quality education there to give the school a chance of survival, the suggestion of closure has become almost a self-fulfilling prophecy in that some parents saw the possibility of that and located their children in other areas.

To some extent, that has been offset by the fact that many people elsewhere in Darwin have seen the quality of education services provided at Rapid Creek Primary School and have chosen to place their children at that school because of the programs offered there. It is interesting to note that the Chairman of the Rapid Creek Primary School Council actually lives in Tiwi. With the closure of Tiwi Primary School as well as Rapid Creek Primary School, his family is hit with a double whammy. I understand that his children are entering secondary education next year, not that that is influencing the campaign which he and the school council are waging in an effort to change the government's decision in respect of Rapid Creek Primary School.

As a local member making representations on behalf of the school council, I have made no secret of my responsibilities as a member of this government in terms of supporting government decisions. I cannot and will not step away from that responsibility despite the difficulties it confronts me with electorally and in my family circumstances. No school closure occurs easily. Education is a very emotional subject for every family and the closure of any school is a very emotional event for the school community affected, particularly for small school communities which have battled very hard and worked closely together to retain their schools in the face of potential closure. Emotions are bound to run high in that situation and it is easy to lose sight of some of the overriding economic imperatives which drive government decisions from time to time. It is very comfortable to allow oneself to run with the emotions whilst choosing to ignore the economic imperatives.

In responding to this motion, the Minister for Education clearly spelt out the difficulties which led to the need for the decision to close schools, specifically including the shift in school-age population in the Northern Territory. It is not as if there are more and more school closures in the Northern Territory. The reality is that we have been building new schools in areas where school-age populations are expanding. The converse of that cannot be ignored. In areas where there is a decline in the size of the school-age population, there is a need to rationalize the available facilities. It would be wonderful if we could retain the unique qualities

of small schools - the strong sense of community and the family relationships. However, the government is facing substantial cuts right across the board. We debated that matter yesterday and there will be further debate today on the extent and range of the cuts. It would be interesting to hear members opposite put forward alternatives in terms of across-the-board cuts. Instead, they simply luxuriate in their criticisms of difficult decisions.

As I have said, I would have been very happy if the task force had supported the original departmental recommendations. It did not. I have to live with the fact that the task force, comprised of parents and departmental representatives, arrived at a decision which differed from the departmental recommendation in respect of Rapid Creek Primary School. I can assure the House that, if I had thought there was an opportunity in terms of my electorate to save that school, I would have done so. However, it would have been improper to take decisions based on political imperatives and to seek to prop up my own electorate, possibly at the expense of the member for Millner's electorate. It would have been improper to do that and Cabinet, including myself, would not do that.

I want to address the specifics of the opposition's motion and the problems which arise from it. I will then make some comments about what should be happening in the Rapid Creek situation, and I would urge the member for Wanguri to take a similar approach in helping his constituents to make the best of the circumstances in relation to school closures. As the member for Nightcliff, that is what I am trying to do in respect of the Rapid Creek Primary School community.

The opposition motion begins by calling for censure of the minister 'for failing to consult with parents, teachers and the community about the closure of 11 pre and primary schools'. Apart from the fact that the motion fudges the numbers, it assumes that, when a preschool is moved into the same grounds as a primary school, the preschool is being closed. Although the teacher and the students are still there and, in many cases, have simply moved across the road into another building, the opposition claims that as a closure. That is clearly a nonsense. It is simply an example of the opposition exaggerating its case. In fact, there is to be a total of 8 closures.

As I have said, a task force with COGSO representation met with principals and school councils of both schools identified for closure and schools which would receive students as a result of closures, in Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek. I know that the Rapid Creek Primary School community will be making representations in respect of its view about the adequacy of discussions with the task force in respect of appropriateness and detail. I have made an offer to the school council to be present during those representations and it has taken up that offer.

Mr Bailey: Will you support it? Yes or no?

Mr HATTON: I talk to my constituents about my representations on their behalf, not to you. They know where I stand.

Whilst there is no doubt that a great deal of stress has been created, we must ask whether **education** is really being compromised. What do we find when we look at the figures? The opposition argues that a bloated corporate administrative sector is being retained in central office while teacher numbers are being cut. However, the figures show that, at the time of self-government, there were 600 positions in the non-school sector in the

Department of Education. In 1991, after this current ERC exercise, the number will have dropped to around 300. Despite the fact that enrolments have risen and staff numbers in the school sector have risen significantly since self-government, numbers in the non-school sector have been halved. The figures contained in the documentation have been quoted many times. In fact, the largest proportional cut in any sector of the Department of Education was inflicted on corporate administrative services, which suffered a reduction of 15.9%. Educational support services were reduced by 11.3% and those within schools and colleges were down by 5%, with a total overall cut of 6.3%. Proportionately, the smallest cut was to the schools.

This morning, the Minister for Education again pointed out that, despite the changes in pupil-teacher ratios, they are still among the best in the country. We have to keep these discussions in context so that reason balances emotion. The fact is that, even after these reductions, our educational services will still rate highly by national standards. That has to be the fundamental consideration - not where we have come from, but where we are at present and where we are heading. The fact is that our education services will continue to be at the forefront in Australia.

I turn now to the situation in my electorate. Meetings were held at Rapid Creek Primary School and the member for Millner attended those. On the Friday before the ERC cuts were announced, the parents strongly expressed their concerns about the possible closure of the school. On the evening after the ERC cuts were announced, I attended an emergency meeting at the school. I was at the school on the Tuesday afternoon and I was there again on the Wednesday. I will continue to visit the school to follow through the process.

Parents are raising a number of questions which need to be dealt with. As the questions and issues arise, I am making representations on behalf of the parents and teachers. I can advise that the department has met with all staff at Rapid Creek Primary School and has given assurances that all their special programs will be available at one or more of the schools which will receive Rapid Creek students. These include programs in Indonesian, Italian, English as a second language and music. I have a particular interest in the LOTE program developed within the school.

The regional superintendent has already made arrangements to meet principals and school councils to ensure that Rapid Creek programs will be available and appropriately staffed in 1991. Consultations with staff will ensure that those staff who wish to follow their students to their new school can do so. All staff have had the opportunity to be involved in these discussions this week. The secretary and superintendent met with all staff at Rapid Creek Primary School at 3.15 pm on Monday of this week and I made representations on behalf of the school to encourage such early consultation with teachers. I am very pleased that, with the support of the minister, the department has implemented that process.

Another matter of equal interest to me is that another school in my electorate, Nightcliff Primary School, will be affected. I believe that a significant number of the 176 students now attending Rapid Creek Primary School will attend Nightcliff Primary School next year. Of the 176 students, 111 live currently in Rapid Creek and my discussions with parents indicate that most intend to send their children to Nightcliff Primary School. Some students will be going on to high school of course. However, there will be an influx of preschoolers. Equally, concerns need to be addressed in respect of the impact on the Somerville Child

Care Centre which has been using the Rapid Creek Preschool, and is concerned about its

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viability. There are also concerns in relation to children from the Nightcliff Family Centre crèche making use of the Nightcliff Preschool. Such details will have to be worked through in the coming months to ensure that we do not undermine the viability and services of both of those child-care centres, and their relationships with the preschools.

The monthly meeting of the Nightcliff Primary School Council was held on Wednesday. In probably the most positive move which has occurred, it intends to examine the potential impact of an intake of up to 100 students from Rapid Creek Primary School. At present, there are estimated to be only 50 vacancies. However, demographic analysis is expected to indicate that further vacancies will occur as limitations are placed on the intake of students from outside Nightcliff and Rapid Creek. Rapid Creek parents are making early enrolments of their children in other schools so that we can start to manage the adjustments and ensure that all Rapid Creek children wanting to attend Nightcliff Primary School can do so. As the local member, it is certainly my intention to ensure that that occurs. In doing so, I will be happy to work with the member for Millner because part of Rapid Creek falls within his electorate. I will be happy to work with him to ensure that, wherever possible, those parents and students have that opportunity.

Nightcliff Primary School proposed that, for the balance of this year, it would seek to form a joint school council with the Rapid Creek School Council with the objective of treating the adjustment more as an amalgamation of the schools than as simply taking students from a school that is closing. It was proposed that we look at how we may be able to create a new school community with the best of the programs from each of those schools. That is a matter that can and should be addressed as soon as possible. However, I doubt whether the Rapid Creek school community will be particularly interested in addressing that at this stage whilst its fighting blood is roused and it is battling to retain Rapid Creek Primary School. Nevertheless, the Nightcliff school community is prepared to make that offer available.

Frankly, the decision has been made and, as I have advised the school community, I cannot believe that it will be changed. In that circumstance, we should seek to retain the best programs that we can. It is my intention to work with the parents, the students and the teachers to look after each of the individual programs. As I have said, I am promoting some innovative approaches such as ensuring the continuation of Rapid Creek's programs and philosophy by encouraging that informal amalgamation and transferring special programs, materials, equipment and staff by agreement with the principals and councils of the schools concerned, by treating each child and his or her parents as individuals and consulting with them to ensure a guaranteed enrolment at the school of their choice, subject to priority feeder area requirements, by early finalization of enrolments at receiving schools to ensure that each child's curriculum requirements are met, and by negotiating, with the agreement of the school councils concerned, for inclusion in the receiving school of key elements of the philosophy of the closing school. I am promoting those approaches to assist with management of the situation.

When I began this speech, I made the point that, on a personal basis, it is very difficult for myself, my family and my friends and neighbours to face the closure of Rapid Creek Primary school. I do not step away from that. I have fought and argued for years in an attempt to find ways to keep Rapid Creek Primary School open but, as I said before, the fact that the threat of closure has been there for so long has lent an air almost of

inevitability to the idea that it would be closed. Because of that, it became very difficult to recruit students for the school. Nonetheless, I believe Rapid Creek Primary School has done an excellent job. I trust that the programs and the **educational** philosophies that have been developed there can be brought into Nightcliff Primary School, or other receiving schools, so that they will not be lost, and so that we can hold together the school community as much as possible or bring together some amalgam of it in a new school community. We can beat our breasts and fight about the circumstances that we are confronting now but, as local members, we need equally to think about the practicalities of what we can do to minimize the disruption that will affect our constituents, and I will certainly be directing my attention to that.

Mr SMITH (Millner): Mr Speaker, there is none more sanctimonious than the member for Nightcliff when he sets his mind to it, and that is one of the more sanctimonious performances I have heard him give. Judging from that speech, one might believe that the member for Nightcliff is all things to all people in the Rapid Creek area, but I can assure him and his government that he is not. There is one thing that gets up my nose, and I am sorry to bring families into this because, as a rule, I do not do that. However, for the honourable member to say that he and his family have a strong emotional attachment to Rapid Creek Primary School when he pulled his 2 junior kids out of the school and sent them to another school, is utter hypocrisy. If he knew 6 years ago that Rapid Creek Primary School was under threat, and if that is the reason he pulled his kids out and sent them somewhere else, he kept that pretty damned secret because no one else in the school community knew it. He is an absolute hypocrite on this issue, and he stands condemned.

I thought that an appalling performance. For him to stand up sanctimoniously and say that his family had some strong commitment to Rapid Creek Primary School when he had removed his own children kids from there because he thought that the school might close in the near future ...

Mr Perron: At least he has still got a family!

Mr SMITH: He stands condemned, and so do you for your foul mouth. You are foul-mouthed. I would rather be - no, I will not ...

Mr Perron: Come on, come on.

Mr SMITH: Yes, I can if you like.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: If you talk about my kids and my family compared to your kids and your family, we can get into that if you like. We can swap stories if you want to.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the honourable member to address his remarks through the Chair.

Mr SMITH: Well, you stop the honourable Chief Minister, Mr Speaker, from making very personal asides, because he will get tit for tat. If he wishes to continue in that way, I will serve it right up to him.

Mr Perron: It is all right for you and my colleague here, but not for anybody else.

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Mr SMITH: That is right. It is a point of principle.

Mr Speaker, I did not talk in a sanctimonious fashion about his strong emotional commitment to his school when he has pulled his kids out. He did that, and I think people deserve to know the true facts.

Mr Hatton: I took my kids out of that particular school because of a particular teacher.

Mr SMITH: Oh yes, fine.

Mr SPEAKER: Order!

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, this censure motion is not directed against the member for Nightcliff. It is pretty hard to censure people for being sanctimonious. This motion seeks to censure the Minister for **Education**, and for very good reason. It is about the process and the manner in which he went about the exercise of closing schools. Let me take you back to how it started, Mr Speaker.

We did not have a frank and open admission from the Minister for **Education** that, as part of his contribution to the ERC, he was looking at closing schools. It had to be forced out of him by the member for Wanguri. It was the member for Wanguri who brought it out into the open. The Minister for Education got off on the wrong foot as a result of being forced into a position where he had to agree, after the matter became public, that he was looking at closing schools. This happened after he had already been around to 39 schools. I think that was the number he boasted of and, as far as I can see, not once in the course of visiting those 39 schools did he indicate that he was looking at closing schools.

I will give an example, and I can quote this example because I happen to be the local Member of Parliament and I am on the Millner School Council. When he went to Millner, he did not indicate that Millner was on Geoff Spring's hit list for closure. He did not say that. He said he had just come to have a look at the facilities. He gave no indication that he was looking at closing it and, at that stage; he had no intention of establishing a task force. The fact that we had a task force - and that was half a step better than not having a task force - was due solely to the efforts of the member for Wanguri in having the matter brought into the open. No hint was given to Millner, Tiwi, Wagaman or any of the other schools that they were on the department's hit list. They were not asked for their thoughts. There was nothing from the minister.

That was not a very good start, and it was in that duplicitous way that the honourable minister proceeded with the exercise all the way through. He kept on changing his stories and telling different things to different people. What he forgot was that it was a small community and he would be found out.

Mr Stone: And you rely on hearsay.

Mr SMITH: No, I do not rely on hearsay, Mr Speaker.

Mr Stone: Then where is your information coming from? That is hearsay.

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Mr SMITH: It is not hearsay at all. It comes from a report given by the responsible officer at Millner School to the Millner School Council. It is not hearsay; it is first-hand information.

Let me give you another example, Mr Speaker. After the task force and everybody else had given Rapid Creek Primary School conflicting impressions that it would and would not be forced to close, the minister received a very irate letter from the Rapid Creek School Council which, among other things, accused him of doing secret deals with Millner Primary School. Of course, he was not attempting to do a deal with Millner Primary School over whether it would remain open or not, he was attempting to do a deal over whether the preschool should be amalgamated into the school itself.

Mr Stone: And was overruled by the task force.

Mr SMITH: And was overruled by the task force.

Mr Stone: The independent task force.

Mr SMITH: Thank you. He was overruled by the independent task force ...

Mr Stone: There was no political interference.

Mr SMITH: The supposedly independent task force, and I might come back to that in a minute too.

The point is that, in a letter to the Rapid Creek School Council, he stated that the Millner Primary School community had sought that meeting to talk about the preschool moving into the main school. That is a lie.

Mr Stone: Produce the letter.

Mr SMITH: Yes. I do not have it here, but I will produce it.

Mr Speaker, that is an absolute lie because the minister knows as well as I do that he called for that meeting. He summonsed those people to his office and he put that proposition to them, not the other way around.

Mr Stone: Table the correspondence.

Mr SMITH: I will do so, Mr Speaker, as soon as I get it.

Mr Speaker, that is the approach that the honourable minister has adopted all the way through this exercise. To his credit, at least he had the guts to come out to the Millner Primary School Council.

Mr Stone: And to everyone else who asked me.

Mr SMITH: And to everyone else who might have asked him. He did address the Millner school community and he gave it some quite specific commitments. One of those specific commitments was given not only at that meeting, but also in the car park outside the ABC studio where he lambasted and threatened the President of the Millner Primary School Council, and told him to pull his head in. It was given also at a third meeting where the principal and the president went to his office. That commitment was that he would supply the school council with the relevant financial information about how much money would be saved. They still do not have that information.

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Mr Stone: What did it matter? It was not closed.

Mr SMITH: You gave them a commitment, right through that process, when they were fighting for their very lives, that at least they could fight on an even playing field by having that relevant information, and you did not give them the information.

Mr Stone: Are you complaining because I did not close it?

Mr SMITH: You did not provide the information.

Mr Stone: It is not being closed.

Mr Ede: Give it to them, right!

Mr Stone: Why?

Mr SMITH: That is just 1 example.

Another example was a very clear commitment by the honourable minister that there would be a process over at least 3 to 5 weeks during which the question of school closures would be argued out. That was given on the Tuesday and the Wednesday and, on the Friday, the school council was told it had to report to the task force the following Monday. So much for the process followed by the Minister for Education right throughout this exercise.

I want to put it on record that I congratulate the Millner Primary School Council for the way that it performed in this exercise, against overwhelming odds, against a minister who made promises and did not carry them out and against a department which, for some strange reason, had decided without any evidence at all that it would close Millner Primary School.

Mr Stone: And won on the merits.

Mr SMITH: If it could win on its merits before an independent task force, why did the Department of **Education** slot it in the first place? If the merits were clear to the task force after a 2-hour meeting and a process that took one week with its limited resources, why did the department slot it in the first place? I

will tell you why, Mr Speaker. Because the Secretary of the Department of the Education is either a paid up member of the Country Liberal Party or, if he is not, he hands out how-to-vote cards for the Country Liberal Party on election day and goes to Country Liberal Party election victory celebrations. Frankly, I think that is disgusting. When there is a Labor government in the Northern Territory, and if I have something to do with it, any departmental head who has any political affiliation whatsoever will be out. You cannot have a situation where a permanent head of a department is an active party member or supporter like that person is because it can sway the person's judgment. If you want an example of how active membership of a political party sways a person's judgment, Mr Speaker, you can look at the case of Millner Primary School. How can a task force, after a 2-hour meeting, come to an objective assessment that Millner Primary School should remain when the Department of Education, with all its resources, has said that it should close?

Mr Hatton: It proves that it was independent.

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Mr SMITH: It proves that the task force was independent and that the Department of Education was not.

The Minister for **Education** has handled this process very badly indeed. School closures require sensitive and careful handling. They require a commitment from the government that it will go through the processes and that it will consult properly. As I said to the Rapid Creek school community, the major problem was that it had not been properly consulted and still has not. Obviously, it will never be consulted properly.

It is always a difficult exercise and it has not been made any easier by the minister proceeding in his jack-booted way, as he has throughout the whole process, upsetting school communities and upsetting children. It might surprise the minister to know that many parents at Rapid Creek have had to comfort kids who have come home crying that the government is closing their school. This has had a major impact on the lives of up to 1000 kids and their parents right across the Northern Territory. There has been no recognition of that whatsoever. He has forgotten the human element in all of this. The reason simply is that he has been forced into this exercise by the fact that the government has had to save money. We can forget everything else. We can forget all the educational arguments that are advanced from time to time. It has been a simple panic-driven, money-saving exercise brought about by 5 or 6 years of government inactivity, staring into the face of disaster and failing to do anything about it. Once again, it is the people at the bottom, the ordinary parents who send their kids to an ordinary government school, who have suffered. This motion seeks to censure the Minister for Education for the clumsy manner in which he has gone about that exercise and the hurt and the distress that he has caused to people.

Let me give another example of how clumsy this exercise has been. Mr Speaker, if you were a teacher at Tiwi or Rapid Creek Primary School or at one of those other schools when the decision was taken, you would feel some responsibility for the closure. In particular, the teachers at Rapid Creek Primary School felt very badly. They felt that they had failed the school. However, no one came to see them for at least a week after the decision was taken.

Mr Stone: That is not true.

Mr SMITH: It is true.

Mr Stone: The superintendents were there next day.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I happened to be at Rapid Creek Primary School on Friday. I saw the Deputy Secretary chauffeuring somebody - I believe it was his secretary - who dropped off a letter relating to school closures to the principal of the school. A man on \$75 000 to \$80 000, the Deputy Secretary to the Department of **Education**, was chauffeuring somebody to drop off a letter. He did not go inside himself.

Mr Stone: You make it up as you go along.

Mr SMITH: Do you want to see me outside?

Members interjecting.

Mr Coulter: Are you offering physical violence to the honourable minister?

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Mr SMITH: Yes, I am.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member for Millner to resume his seat for a moment. Members must maintain a level of respect for one another. I refer honourable members to standing order 66: 'The Assembly will interfere to prevent the prosecution of any personal quarrel between members arising out of debates or proceedings of the Assembly or of any committee thereof, within the precincts'. Clearly, the member for Millner invited the honourable minister to step outside. I do not believe that that is parliamentary. I ask him to reconsider that statement and perhaps withdraw it.

Mr SMITH: Mr Speaker, I withdraw.

The point I was making was that teachers at Rapid Creek, Tiwi, Karguru and other places were given no professional support - for about a week in the case of Rapid Creek - in respect of what was happening to their schools. It is strange indeed that the Deputy Secretary to the department should be acting as a chauffeur to have somebody else deliver a letter relating to school closures, but not go into the school itself to talk to the principal at least. That is a very strange set of priorities indeed.

However, we are debating a censure motion in relation to the Minister for Education. I reiterate that what is a very sensitive matter at the best of times has been handled so badly that there is a reservoir of discontent and distrust among a number of school communities in the Northern Territory that will not go away for a very long time. It does not matter particularly whether it is a school community like Rapid Creek that has been closed or a school community like Millner that has remained open. Both of those school communities and others right throughout the Northern Territory have found themselves in a position where, in their first major contact with the Minister for Education, they have been treated very shabbily indeed. That is the real concern that they have. After the wheelings and dealings of the honourable minister, his failure to tell a straight story and his ability to visit different schools and tell them different things, how can they trust him in future? That is one of the real problems and one of the real legacies of this particular mess.

Mr SETTER (Jingili): Mr Speaker, it is easy to see why the Australian Labor Party lost the last election. After listening to the speech by the member for Millner, it is easy to see why, as their leader, he is a loser and why his party is a loser. I repeat what I said yesterday. It is very interesting that there is to be a Labor conference this weekend and, all of a sudden, we see members of the opposition benches becoming aggressive and very forthright in their speeches. It is quite obvious that they are trying to lift their game in order to impress their party colleagues. This is the first ALP conference for a couple of years because the ALP was not game to have one when an election was looming. That is why we have seen all this aggressiveness. Quite frankly, the whole community has been disappointed at the performance of members opposite over the previous 2 periods of sittings. The member for Millner would be the greatest case in point. Over the last 2 sittings, he sat there with a long face like a kid who had just lost his dummy. All of a sudden, he has fired himself up.

He referred to the sanctimonious approach adopted in this debate by the member for Nightcliff. That is absolute nonsense! If there was a sanctimonious approach to the debate, it was his. We have heard it so many times before - false accusations, threats etc - when he was Leader of the Opposition. If he really wants to get to the bottom of the cause of this

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debate, he need look no further than his mates in Canberra because their policies are the reason why we are standing here today debating this motion.

We heard the other day that this government had suffered cuts in real terms of \$354m or 25.6% of our funding since 1984-85. That is a greater cut in real terms than any state has suffered. We have had to wrestle with that. Like all the states, we have had to adjust our programs to be able to accommodate that. We have had reductions in funding for 7 years, and all we have heard from members opposite is apologies. They do not have the gumption to stand up and criticize their masters in Canberra because they know the real reason why we are debating this issue today. It is because of those savage cuts in funding. Of course, we all have to adjust our programs accordingly.

Let us just have a look at Labor programs. When the member for Millner was Leader of the Opposition prior to the last election, he committed himself to a set of principles. He said: 'A Smith Labor government will reform the financial management of government, ensure an efficient, effective, service-oriented public service ...'. What does the opposition think this exercise is all about?

Mr Ede: Don't you understand yet? We are talking about reform in administration, not ...

Mr SETTER: Come on! We are talking about what the former Leader of the Opposition said: 'an efficient, effective, service-oriented public service'. That is what we are doing in education. The then Leader of the Opposition went on to talk about program analysis. He said: 'The financial constraints facing the incoming Labor government mean that there is no scope for expenditure that is not fully justified'. What does the opposition think we are doing now? We have looked at a range of schools in respect of occupancy rates and closure or possible amalgamation of primary and preschools. Indeed, such considerations have occurred at Wagaman Primary School in my electorate. In this situation, there is no scope for expenditure that is not fully justified. If ever there was a case, we have it here.

The former Leader of the Opposition continued: 'Government projects will be based on real needs and tested against government priorities'. The opposition criticizes us for closing schools for very good reasons whilst, in its transition-to-government document, it indicated that it would do exactly the same thing.

Mr Speaker, I will draw your attention to a couple of other matters which are quite relevant. I refer to the 1989 platform of the Northern Territory Branch of the Australian Labor Party, which contains examples of programs which members opposite would adopt if they were ever - God help us - elected to government in the Northern Territory. I quote: 'Labor in government will assist those who choose not to be part of the normal labour market, to establish economic independence to enable them to generate a level of income appropriate to their lifestyle'. In other words, people who do not want to work and who want to adopt an alternative lifestyle would receive taxpayers' funds from a Labor government in the Northern Territory. Is that efficient and effective delivery of government services? No sir, Mr Speaker.

Listen to this: 'Labor in government will support, by all possible means, union advocacy of a shorter working week with no reduction in wages and conditions'. Is that efficient and effective delivery of government

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services? It means that everybody would work less time for the same money. To use the words of the member for Millner, it is absolute hypocrisy.

I turn now to the terms of the opposition's censure motion. The first point claims that the minister should be censured 'for failing to consult with parents, teachers and the community about the closure of 11 pre and primary schools'. That is absolute nonsense. The minister personally visited a number of primary schools and spoke to the school councils. I was present when he visited Wagaman Primary School.

The opposition accuses the minister of failing to consult not only with parents but also with teachers. I refer members to an extract from an interview with Col Young, the Secretary of the Teachers Federation, on the ABC Morning Program on 19 March. Clare Martin was the interviewer. In reply to a question, Mr Young said: 'I believe that the closure of some schools is the lesser of a number of evils that could occur. I should say also that, hand in hand with the closure of some schools which in itself will not save a great deal of money, there should be a number of other factors which occur'. That is fair enough. Indeed, those matters have been addressed. Mr Young went on to say: 'I think it is also accurate to say that some of the small schools cannot provide the programs, the depth of programs, and the staff expertise that some of the larger schools can. I am not talking about factories, of course. I am talking about moderate-sized schools which have a good range of senior and experienced staff'.

Those are the words of the Secretary of the Teachers Federation. He supported the closure of schools for very good reasons. He said that moderate-sized schools, which have more senior and experienced staff, can deliver services better than can the smaller schools with the smaller enrolment rates, and that is exactly what we are trying to achieve. Students will be transferred from the smaller schools where, in some cases, the occupancy rate is well below 50%. The Secretary of the Teachers Federation said that such children would be better off in a school which had a greater enrolment with better teachers and a greater range of programs. There it is - an endorsement from the Teachers Federation. Clearly, when members of the opposition talk about failing to consult with parents, teachers and the community at large,

they are talking absolute nonsense.

A moment ago, I mentioned the fact that I attended a meeting of the Wagaman Primary School Council about 5 weeks ago. The member for Wanguri attended too, and the minister arrived unannounced. A total of 50 or 60 people were present, covering a cross-section of the Wagaman community and a number of teachers. From memory, the minister was on his feet for about an hour and a half. After spending some 15 minutes explaining the reasons for the process which was under way, he answered every question put to him. The member for Wanguri was there and he heard it all. I spoke to a number of parents and teachers after the meeting and on the following day.

It was a very positive meeting and people were very appreciative of the fact that the minister had attended it. They went away from that meeting reasonably happy although, naturally, they were a little unsettled. That was due in no small part to the activities of the member for Wanguri who has spent the last 6 weeks wandering around school communities trying to unsettle people and stir up trouble, and I will give you a typical example of that, Mr Speaker. Following that meeting which, I believe, was seen in a positive light by the minister and most of the people to whom I spoke, the member for Wanguri issued a press release. It appeared on the following day under the heading 'Bailey Says Government Reveals School Cuts Agenda'. It read as follows:

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Deputy Opposition Leader, John Bailey, said today that **Education** Minister, Shane Stone, revealed the government's previously hidden school cutting program at a public meeting at Wagaman last night. The minister told the meeting of parents and concerned community members that the government was looking at closing 15 schools. People were shocked by the arrogant way the minister approached the topic and it gave many of them an understanding of the way this government plans to treat Territorians during this term of the CLP government.

I know the minister very well. On that particular occasion, he was more relaxed and laid back than I have seen him on many a previous occasion. For the member for Wanguri to accuse the minister of adopting an arrogant approach to that particular meeting is absolute nonsense. It is misinformation and misrepresentation. Probably more than any other member opposite, the member for Wanguri has become expert at doing that out there in the northern suburbs.

Mr Bailey: At least I get my figures right, which is much more than you have ever done.

Mr SETTER: The press release ended by saying: 'The minister has confirmed the arrogance of this government with his behaviour at Wagaman School last night'.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, that the Wagaman School community was appalled by that press release, but the matter did not end there. The very next morning, the honourable member faced a television camera right in front of the Wagaman Primary School, in an effort to gain some political advantage as Deputy Leader of the Opposition and to embarrass the government. He was simply attempting to use the Wagaman school community to suit his own political ends. I can tell him that people are less than impressed about that.

Mr Bailey: You should hear what they say about you, Rick.

Mr SETTER: I would be interested. You will have to tell me.

About a week ago, I went to a subsequent meeting of the Wagaman Primary School Council. In fact, I attend almost every school council meeting held in my electorate. The member for Wanguri turned up again, and rightly so, because 25% of the suburb of Wagaman is in his electorate. I have the other 75%. He turned up 30 minutes after the meeting had started and listened for a while. By then, the announcement had been made that it was proposed that Wagaman Preschool be incorporated into the primary school buildings. Naturally, the preschool parents and the preschool teacher were concerned about that and a discussion was under way. I was absolutely aghast to hear the member for Wanguri try to politicize that meeting. He started to run off at the mouth about government involvement in the Sheratons and Yulara and CLP government mismanagement. We have heard it all before a thousand times.

Mr Ede: It is true.

Mr SETTER: It is not true at all, Mr Speaker.

Once again, the member for Wanguri attempted to use the school community of Wagaman to suit his own political ends. I had to put the member for Wanguri in his place. I told him that it was totally inappropriate for him

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to attempt to politicize that meeting. To have a debate on **educational** grounds is fine. However, when he started attacking the CLP government and its so-called deals with the Sheratons and whatever, he politicized that meeting and I was not going to sit there and cop it. I told him so and I must say the whole shabby exercise was frowned on by the Wagaman school community because I spoke to a number of them later.

Mr Speaker, I would like to quote from a letter written by the principal of Wagaman Primary School and circulated last week:

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The most important issue concerning Wagaman school has now been resolved. The school will continue to function, with one alteration - the relocation of the preschool to the primary school. The preschool will not close. I personally believe that this is a relatively small price to pay for the retention of the stability of our school. I would urge you not to make any hasty decisions until the facts of relocation and the consultation process with the department, council and preschool association takes place.

If you wish to discuss the matter further, I am available for discussion, either personally or by telephone, at your convenience. It is important at this stage to remember that the educational resources of Wagaman school have not been reduced and that the preschool relocation will be made in the best interests of all involved.

And I would like to quote from a note which was circulated at the same time by the president of the school council:

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

As the chairperson of the school council, I wish to advise you of the implications of the ERC statement as applicable to Wagaman Primary School. Prior to the announcement, Mr Jackson and I made a submission to the department task force which in fact reversed the original intention of the department to close Wagaman Primary and Preschools.

The consequence of the preschool relocation into the main primary school building is, I believe, an unsolicited compromise to the benefit of the school as a whole ... the revised staffing formula also announced will have little or no impact on your child's education.

That is the position at the Wagaman Primary School in my electorate. Nobody, including myself, wants to see any school community relocated and, of course, destabilized as a result. By their nature, people resist change. The reality is that the government has no option and the decision has been made. From that letter, it can be seen that the Wagaman School community has accepted that.

Of course, there is nothing new about school closures. I mentioned earlier that there have been savage funding cuts in all states around Australia. Schools have been closed already in New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT. We heard the Attorney-General and the Minister for Health and Community Services refer to Tasmania. Overall staffing in the Department of Education there had been reduced by 1056. That was a reduction of something like 16%. We are suffering nothing like that. The pain that our education system will be required to bear is quite mild compared to what has been

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imposed by the states on their school communities as a result of cuts by the federal government.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr EDE (Opposition Leader): Mr Speaker, I waited for some time to contribute to this debate in order to see whether any argument would be presented by government members that would remove the necessity for this censure motion or provide any substance for their belated amendment. I have been disappointed. The honourable minister had every opportunity to extend the apology which I am thankful that he extended to me this morning. He should have extended it to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition because he was patently wrong in the figures that he provided in that debate. He patently misled this House yesterday morning, when he said that there were only 10 superintendents in the Northern Territory. That was not a small point. In fact, it was central to the answer to the question, which was a dorothy dixer from the government backbench put to try to make him look good. Fundamentally, he misled the House by saying that he had only 10 superintendents.

Mr Reed: The Prime Minister has turned that into an art form.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, unfortunately, the minister opposite has been attempting to turn back down into an art form. However, he got his apology only half right. He apologized only in terms of the numbers of students who are in the **education** system in Tasmania compared to here. I could forgive him for getting

that part wrong. I cannot forgive him for getting wrong the number of superintendents he has in his own department. I know he has been around for only 6 months, but one would have thought he would have got that far down the system. He has not got anywhere near parents, but at least he should have got down as far as the superintendents. As we stated, we have 7 functional superintendents and 10 regional superintendents - a total of 17 superintendents. He made a totally false accusation against the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, which he has yet to withdraw. He has another opportunity to speak to the amendment. I expect him to stand up and apologise to this House and to my colleague. The fact is that he is now making an art form of these broken promises.

Mr Stone: What broken promises?

Mr EDE: What broken promises? He has not even taken them on board. The promise that you made to the people of Millner Primary school that you would provide them with that information.

Mr Stone: It was not closed. You were not listening either.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, does that matter? Does that matter in terms of the promises you make? Does it matter that you make a promise and then renege on it? Reneging at cards is generally referred to as cheating. It is a serious matter and I would have thought that, having made a promise to those people, the minister would have at least stood by it. Obviously, he walked away on the basis of the fact that, this time around, that school was not closed. That was no thanks to his department and no thanks to him.

Ever since he joined us here, the Leader of Government Business would like to have been known as Ironbar Setter. At one stage, he attempted to promote the story that he was known as the Toecutter. Ironbar Setter! In fact, he is more like a Teddy Bear. Teddy Bear Setter might be more appropriate. He has yet to get it right. He attempted to talk about this

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as if it were some form of economic rationalism. If he wants to know what economic rationalism is about, it is not about cutting services.

Mr Setter: Of course it is about rationalism.

Mr EDE: I will take that on board, Mr Speaker, because it shows a total and profound ignorance that is beautiful only in its entirety and purity, totally unbesmirched by any degree of knowledge. The fact is that it is about more efficient delivery of services. If any members on that side of the House had managed to get that through their heads at the time of the 1987 cuts and had applied the principles, we would not be in this situation today, totally irrespective of the federal cuts. All they had to do was to make a 3% per year improvement in efficiency. If they had done that, the total accumulated amount would have now been \$378m - well above the total amount of cuts by the federal government.

On the other hand, if they wish to look only at the degree of the cuts that we have had now, what would have been required? All that would have been required was 1% of efficiency from 6 years ago to date to be able to negate these total claims. None of this was necessary, because if we are looking at 3% ...

Members interjecting.

Mr EDE: Put the 3% aside. I accept that that might be totally beyond your capabilities. Is 1% per annum beyond your capability? If that is not beyond his capabilities, that may be something that he can aim for in the next few years. If you are looking at 1%, it is not necessary to cut services by 1% because it can be found in terms of more efficient service delivery, without the cutting of services.

That is what economic rationalism is about, and it is something that has not got through to members opposite, who believe that it is a simple matter of letting the problem build up and then putting it away when there are some problems with the electorate. When an election is due, they decide not to do anything about the problem until the election is over. They work on the basis that, if they are returned in the election, they will race back in here and cut services to blazes and hope that people will have forgotten about it in 3 years time. They do not have a hope.

The fourth paragraph of the censure motion requires the Assembly to censure the minister for 'retaining a bloated administration while diminishing the number of face-to-face teachers'. Mr Speaker, that is the item that I want particularly to talk about. The amendment attempts to say that the minister has made the highest proportion of reductions outside the school fence, and I reject that. I believe the point that we made correctly describes the situation. Look at the top level, Mr Speaker. It is incredible. When I saw it first, it struck me that I had seen something like it before somewhere. I went back to my old textbooks of business administration, and found something very similar. There it was. IBM has a very similar structure. There is some difference in the scale of the operations further down the line and a difference in the scale of the product that is being produced, but very little difference at the top. It is a structure of about the same size: 1 departmental secretary, 3 deputy secretaries, 3 assistant secretaries, 10 secretaries, 7 functional superintendents, 10 regional superintendents, and so on.

I do not deny that some cuts have been made in corporate services. However, these are largely from junior level administration and from the

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gutting of regional offices in places like Alice Springs. The cuts have not been made from the top levels, from among those who play golf with each other, have a drink together after work and assure each other that they will be looked after. It has been put to me that the rationale behind this is that the system will recover one day and the structure will be developed again. Therefore, the decision has been taken to retain a hard core of experienced bureaucrats in place to build on when that time comes. That is how they justified it among themselves. They agreed to look after each other and let the cuts be made at the bottom.

Those figures go to the core of the deception that the minister is peddling. The reality of cuts to teaching staff and schools is revealed in his own departmental document. The reality is also that he intends to save over \$9m by changing the staffing formula and \$2m by closing schools as opposed to the total lie in the statements by the Chief Minister and by the ministers that the bulk of the cuts have been made in administration.

Mr Stone: Would you prefer that I increased the formula?

Mr EDE: It is despicable, and you deserve censure for it. Let us look at some of the effects of these cuts in the staff ratios on schools. There are 3 major effects: the class sizes are increased, the curriculum is narrowed, and the promotional opportunities are reduced. Class sizes will increase by up to 25%. The numbers of teachers in schools will be reduced and this will result in a change in the existing numbers of classes. It may be possible for some classes to be accommodated by means of absorption, but there are particular problems with the smaller schools. Whenever class sizes are increased, the quality of education declines.

Secondly, there will be cuts to the curriculum. With the reduction in teacher numbers, some schools will have to examine seriously whether they can continue to offer all the courses that they provide at present. The options would be to reduce the curriculum or to make class sizes so large as to be totally unworkable. Once again, this will have a worse effect in small schools.

Thirdly, there will be restrictions on promotion. When the staff formula is reduced, positions are lost at all levels. The number of Band 2s, Band 3s and Band 4s is always dependent on the staff-student ratio. If positions are reduced at the bottom, that reduces the availability of experience teachers would have gained in them. As a result, the opportunities for people at that level to obtain promotion are reduced similarly. That situation immediately exacerbates problems of recruitment and retention which are already major concerns in our schools.

Mr Perron: interjecting.

Mr EDE: Where have you been? And do not use the argument of the master teacher program. I have been waiting for the proposition to be made that somehow the master teacher program will provide an alternative opportunity for teachers to be promoted. The role of the master teacher program has been changed as well. In fact, I doubt whether the master teacher program will be able to survive because the original idea of master teachers was to ensure ...

Mr Stone: Did you support it?

Mr EDE: Yes.

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The aim was to ensure that talented teachers, who wanted to stay in the classroom and teach as opposed to leaving the classroom and going into administration, would be able to do so by taking a second promotional option. What has happened now? The master teachers have been loaded down with so much of the advisory and teacher support functions, which formerly were performed by other teachers, that there is a very real danger that the administrative workload that attaches to those functions will become such that it will affect their ability to teach. That totally negates the purpose of the master teachers program, which was to enable high-quality teachers to continue teaching in the classroom without their being deprived of the opportunity to gain 'promotion'. Thus, there is a major threat to the master teachers program less than a year after it was put in place.

Let us take a closer look at the cuts to the advisory and support services. By way of example, I will look at the effects of the cuts in Alice Springs. The education officer positions in maths, English and computers are gone. This means that the service designed to provide up-to-date teaching aids, teaching

methodology and assessment in the critical areas of English, maths and computers is gone. In relation to English and maths, this flies in the face of all other governments in Australia which are actively working to ensure improvements in those areas. It has severe implications for the implementation of the new English curriculum program that has been developed over several years and that is planned for implementation in 1992. The regional educational officers who were integral in training teachers in the implementation of that curriculum and in monitoring that implementation are gone. That is all to be centralized in Darwin.

The belief that services can be provided from Darwin at the same cost and level of efficiency is total garbage. It could be perpetrated only by a minister who had decided to take up residence this side of the Berrimah line and shut his eyes to the rest of the Territory.

Mr Stone: interjecting.

Mr EDE: You might have a property there, but I would not call it a home. You live here.

Mr Stone: I live in both, from time to time.

Mr Ortmann: Home is where the heart is.

Mr EDE: I rent a flat here, but that does not mean that it is my home.

Mr Stone: Where do you live?

Mr Bailey: We are talking about closing schools and you are sitting there talking about how many houses you live in.

Mr EDE: Mr Speaker, the computer education officer was not there simply to monitor the computer **education** courses. The position assisted teachers in the development of computer skills. The use of computers is now intensive. That is an initiative on which the opposition supported the government over a number of years and there have been some leaps forward in terms of computer education. The unfortunate fact with computer technology is that continuity of staff must be maintained and it should be ensured that they receive constant training to keep abreast of developments in the field. The removal of positions like those of the education officer (computers) is a savage blow to our development. If we are unable to keep

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abreast of computer developments, we will fall behind very rapidly compared to the rest of Australia. If that results from making the 'highest proportion of reductions outside the school fence', it is a total and hopeless waste.

In a later debate, I will refer to another matter which relates to my own electorate. I will not discuss it in debate on a censure motion. When we have finished debating the ERC, we can discuss that matter. I believe that it is despicable, disgraceful and worthy of censure that, through this process, the minister has sabotaged programs in bush schools that have taken many years to develop and which were close to coming to fruition.

Mr COLLINS (Greatorrex): Mr Speaker, I suppose that, if ever I were to have an opportunity to stick the knife into the Minister for Education in revenge for his doing me out of CLP preselection a couple of terms ago, this would be it.

Mr Bell: Make sure you don't miss out!

Mr COLLINS: However, in reality, I do not hold any grudge against the Minister for Education. In one sense, perhaps, he did me a big favour. I enjoy being on the crossbenches. It may mean that I miss out on the possibility of moving a little higher up the ladder, but that is how it goes.

Mr Ede: They could have made you deputy whip!

Mr COLLINS: Deputy whip. That would be about as high as I would have ever gone.

Mr Ede: That could have meant another \$5000 or \$6000. Name your price!

Mr COLLINS: Mr Speaker, to be serious, it is obvious that the entire country is experiencing financial problems and I would like to quote from the ABC Lateline program last night. The topic of the program was Coronation Hill, sacred sites etc. At the end, Senator Walsh was given the opportunity to comment. I do not think that Senator Walsh totally understands the monetary system and the way in which credit is created, but I think most of us have a pretty high regard for him. He believes what he says, and is an honest gentleman. The interviewer put it to him that it would be very hard for the federal Cabinet to come down in favour of mining at Coronation Hill after all that has occurred before. I believe that Senator Walsh's response is pertinent:

Australians have been living on borrowed money and borrowed time for a long period and, sooner or later, if they do not realize that they cannot afford these sorts of flippant obstructions to overcoming our fundamental economic problems, the management of the Australian economy will be taken out of the hands effectively of the Australian government.

That frightens me, Mr Speaker. That is saying that we will not be in control of our own economy. I am sure that the good Senator measured his words pretty carefully, and I would like to know a great deal more about what he was referring to. Who will take over the economic control of the country? I am sure that he is very concerned about our debt level. Because of that debt level, Territory funding has been cut, especially as this government is not politically in favour in Canberra. However, it would not matter whether the ALP or the CLP had won the last election, or even a group

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of independents, highly unlikely as that might be. We would all be in the same position and we would all be ...

A member: interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Not necessarily. That is how it used to be. The British system was that everybody was

elected and then they banded together to form a government. I am sure that you do not need to be told how that worked.

Mr Speaker, getting down to the tintacks, what concerns me most is the fate of Traeger Park Primary School which is in the heart of my electorate. It was the second oldest existing primary school in the Alice Springs area. It was named after Alfred Traeger, who was the pedal wireless operator for the flying doctor. Perhaps 10 days ago, I had a phone call from Mrs Hughes, a lady who attended the opening of that school. Her husband was a policeman. She said something which, interestingly, was raised by the member for MacDonnell this morning. She said: 'It was stated at the opening that the school was designed in a manner such that, in an emergency, it could become a hospital'.

Mr Bell: I do not think that she had a fiscal emergency in mind.

Mr COLLINS: That may well be true. However, if we do not concentrate on the fiscal situation and our present monetary system, we will all be in the type of trouble to which Senator Walsh referred on Lateline last night, and I will come back to that shortly.

It is certainly true that most of my constituents would vastly prefer to have Traeger Park Primary School remain open than for a new Parliament House to be built, and I sympathies with that sentiment. The school has not been an easy school for the staff to work in and parental interest has not been strong, certainly not strong enough to have a school council ...

Mr Bell interjecting:

Mr COLLINS: I can see that there is a positive side in that. It seemed impossible to have a council established for that school. Perhaps it was because parents were too shy. Whatever the reason, a council was not established. That did not help the school and it certainly did not help the teachers.

I will say, however, that there are some very positive aspects to the school. A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of joining parents and students at an open morning at the school. I even cooked a few pancakes and raised a few bob for the school. It was good to be there and to sense the way the teachers felt about the students. Three ladies helped me to serve the pancakes and I could tell from their conversation and their attitude towards the children that they were very caring and concerned and had built up very good relationships with them, as one would expect in any school. I dip my lid to the principal's dedication. It is not easy to run a school when many of the students do not attend very regularly. Some of them come from the creek. Apparently they do not fit in tribally at the Yipirinya school and the Traeger Park School has been their home.

If there is one positive aspect of the listing of the school for closure at the end of the year, it is the way in which parents have been galvanized into action. I would have been at the school on Saturday had it not been for a long-standing commitment to work at the Sadadeen Primary School fete.

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However, if the parents can maintain their current level of interest in their children's **education**, the outcomes will not be entirely negative. Whilst I agree with the parents that it will be difficult for the students to go to a new school, which will be bigger and which will be strange to them at first that can also

be an opportunity, particularly if the parents take a positive attitude.

I have spoken to the minister about how the department will handle the matter. I understand that the children from Traeger Park Primary School will be distributed among a number of primary schools, and it would be helpful if, say for the last month of this year, teachers from Traeger Park Primary School who will be transferring to particular schools spend considerable time with children who will be attending those same schools. Thus, when the children arrive in their new schools next year, they will be able to relate to one of those teachers as well as some other children from Traeger Park Primary School. I believe that that will help the transition. I know that the minister is sympathetic to that viewpoint. We said virtually the same thing to one another on the plane travelling to Alice Springs last Wednesday, and I believe that it would be a positive step. If the parents take a greater interest, we ought to capitalize on that, particularly in relation to regular attendance at school. There is nothing more soul-destroying for a teacher than having children who stay away from school intermittently. When children are away for several days a week, you cannot give them a decent education. I will certainly be putting that view in my electorate newsletter, and I may or may not win support for it among the parents.

On the day before the ERC announcements, the minister and I discussed the situation in respect of school closures. He swore me to secrecy and I kept that confidence. We discussed the various Alice Springs situations and, unfortunately, Traeger Park Primary School was the logical school to go if there had to be cuts. It is right in my electorate and I would much rather that it had been in somebody else's. However, I will wear that. I believe that we have to make the best of the situation which has been forced on us by economic constraints and the mess that we are in. Whilst people tend to blame that mess on the federal Labor government and Mr Keating, I blame it on the banking system. Honourable members may have heard my comments about that yesterday and I will keep hammering away until, perhaps, some honourable members will appreciate the situation. I am sure that some are already realizing that there is something wrong in that regard.

I do have particular concern for the Alice Springs children in Year 6 this year. They will be in Year 7 next year and, as a result of the ERC recommendations, they will spend that year in high school. Therefore, they will miss out on what I believe is a very important experience in many children's lives - that of being in the top year of primary school. There is nothing that can be done about it. If you happen to be in the first class in a new school, you remain in the top year all the way through, as occurred in my daughter's case at St Philips College. She has been in that leadership group throughout her life at primary school and that has been a great experience for her. Unfortunately, however, children who are in Year 6 in Alice Springs this year will miss out on that opportunity. That is unfortunate because it is a grand experience. I believe that most of us can remember the sensation of being in that leadership role in the top year of primary school. The sensation soon disappears when one goes in at the bottom of the pile at high school, but it is a matter of some regret that those children will miss out.

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The question of class size has been raised in this Assembly on many occasions. It is now more than 11 years since I was a classroom teacher. In fact, I taught until 1 April 1980 before officially resigning, and maybe the date was significant. During much of my teaching career, I was not really aware of the advantages of big classes. I recall having a Year 11 geology class which contained 44 students. Whilst I had a personal interest in the subject, I had studied it for only 1 year at university and, in 12 years of teaching, had generally taught it only in junior science and to a limited extent in matriculation physics, where it was pertinent to crystallography, x-rays etc. I enjoyed my class of 44 students. I had to work hard

but we seemed to be getting on pretty well. The students were starting to catch on and were firing up nicely when someone in the Teachers Federation heard about the size of the class. The word spread behind my back and suddenly I found that the class had been split in half. We could never regain the same enthusiasm in that half-size class afterwards.

I have always scratched my head about it, but I believe that it works in this way. If a class is large enough and children find compatible peers, the teaching process is far broader than teacher to student and student to teacher. With compatible students, a great deal of good teaching occurs between student and student. They ask one another what the teacher meant and they give explanations to one another. Children learn a great deal in that process because there is no better way to learn than by trying to teach somebody else. Anyone who has taught will realize the truth of that. If you are unsure of yourself when you try to teach someone else, it is very evident. When students help to teach one another, the whole learning process gels. Based on my own experience, I do not believe that small classes necessarily result in better teaching. It is a matter of children learning from children. It depends on how the teacher runs the class. In a large class that is properly run, there is no room for any nonsense and there is plenty of hard work. Big classes worked in the past and people were given a good education in them.

I have listened to the debate on the education cuts. I have also tried to put myself in the minister's position in terms of how one would go about deciding where to make cuts. It is a no-win situation. Anything which affects children is an emotional issue. However, when all the dust settles, I do not believe that there will be a great deal of detriment to education. If our attitudes are right, I believe that there can even be an improvement in education.

It will certainly be an experience for the children of Traeger Park Primary School. If their parents support and encourage them instead of saying that it is Traeger Park or nothing, it could be a positive experience. Many of these children are fairly shy. If they can rub shoulders with a wider group of students, I do not believe that they will be worse off.

A member: interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: I said 'wider', but it may be 'whiter' too. It does not matter. We live together in the community and I believe that positive things result from it.

I really cannot see how the minister could have gone about the process in any other way. Rumours are circulating but one cannot prevent that. I think that every school should have been looked at and I am sure that they were.

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A member: interjecting.

Mr COLLINS: Perhaps there are some schools which obviously could not be closed. For example, given that Sadadeen Secondary College is the only high school in an area, it could hardly be removed from the system.

I suppose that I could have stuck the knife into the minister but I am not the vindictive type. It is not my role to push my own barrow and try to wreak revenge on other people. As I said, I have a sneaking

feeling that he did me a favour anyway. I believe that he has done a reasonable job in this exercise. I know some of the people who have been fairly closely involved in the exercise at the departmental level. How widely do you consult? Do you consult every parent and every student? After all, governments are elected to do a job.

Senator Walsh's statement is quite alarming. It indicates the huge increase in debt in this country. When it was inherited from the Fraser administration, it was \$32 000m to \$35 000m and it is now in excess of \$150 000m. We have to understand that that has happened during the Labor administration, but I do not necessarily totally blame the Labor administration. I blame something called compound interest. It has a marvelous way of making things go like a rocket. I blame our faulty monetary system.

It is a pity that the Territory is not a state. I will give the Chief Minister what I consider to be the most important reason why we should be a state. If we were a state, we would have the power to create our own bank under section 51(13) of the Australian Constitution, which gives the Commonwealth government the power to create laws regarding banking, except state banking, and laws regarding state banking outside of the state in question. The states have the power to create banks. I do not mean the State Banks of Victoria and South Australia which are private banks. The only involvement of the government there was to back them up with the taxpayers' funds if they failed. Obviously, Mr Bannon was not given too good advice and his bank certainly indulged in some non-bank practices.

However, I mean the type of bank that was run by the Commonwealth and by Sir Denison Miller, who funded the World War I effort for the 350m Pounds. Taxation was 6d in the pound. He funded the east-west railway. What a pity he did not live a bit longer because we would have had our north-south railway. Today, we seek money from Japan. If we had our own bank we would be able to create the credit against the Northern Territory people and have the Territory people themselves build the railway. If that sounds fanciful, I suggest members look at what Sir Denison Miller did in the Commonwealth Bank. The Commonwealth Bank is extremely strong. He said that anything that the people of Australia can sensibly undertake ...

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr BAILEY (Wanguri): Mr Deputy Speaker, we have before us an amendment to my colleague's motion to censure the Minister for Education. I had expected that an amendment would be moved to our motion because it is the tactic that this government uses over and over again. The amendment proposes that we insert that 'this Assembly commends the Minister for Education for (1) establishing a task force to consult with principals, school councils, parents and the community about the closure of 8 pre and primary schools; (2) alleviating the distress caused to students and parents by personal communication with parents and ensuring that action is in hand to provide all programs at receiving schools and allowing schools and

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parents until the end of 1991 to make the arrangements necessary for their children for 1992; (3) ensuring the quality of education for all Territory children; and (4) making the highest proportion of reductions outside the school fence'. I cannot believe that the Attorney-General could propose an amendment to my colleague's motion that was so immoral and so wrong, and do it without a smile on his face.

A member: interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: You do not really expect the public of the Northern Territory to believe a word of the amendment, do you?

Let us have a look at the individual points. It proposes commending the minister for: 'establishing a task force to consult with principals, school councils ...'

Mr Perron: You don't have to read it again. Come on!

Mr BAILEY: It needs to be read again because you lot are so thick that you do not even understand what it is you will vote for. If we repeat it a number of times, perhaps you will understand.

It proposes commending the minister for 'establishing a task force to consult with principals, school councils, parents and the community about the closure of 8 pre and primary schools'. And that is a lie. How can the government expect members to support an amendment that has been proven over and over again today to be a lie? It was a ministerial task force which was set up solely by the minister. It comprised 3 departmental people, 1 person appointed by the minister, and a representative from COGSO. In 2 weeks, it visited a large number of schools. To whom did it talk? It talked to the principal and the chairman of each school council. In most cases, it visited schools when they were closed - on weekends, out of hours or during the school holidays.

Unless the Attorney-General wants that inaccuracy in his amendment to remain on the record of this parliament, he needs to remove any suggestion that the task force consulted with parents or the community about school closures. It never did so. His own minister stated what the process was. If the Attorney-General wants to amend his amendment, it could state that a task force was established that visited schools after school hours and during holidays to talk to school principals and the chairmen of school councils. In no way did it consult with any parents or the community about the closure of schools.

The second part of the amendment commends the minister 'for alleviating the distress caused to students and parents by personal communication with parents and assuring that action is in hand to provide all programs at receiving schools and allowing schools and parents until the end of 1991 to make the arrangements necessary for their children for 1992'. We have heard from the member for Millner how ...

Mr Coulter: Talk to the amendment.

Mr BAILEY: That is what I am talking to. We have heard how the minister has refused to provide information to schools. He has refused to provide information to me. I rang his department 5 weeks ago and asked quite a simple question at the time when the school closures were being suggested and the minister was saying that all the facts were on the table. I asked one of his ministerial officers if we could have a list of school

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enrolments. The ministerial officer said that the information would be supplied, but that it might take a little time. It was public information that would allow us to have reasoned and informed discussions. The officer

saw no problems because it was information that the task force was working on.

Some 4 weeks later, I rang the minister's office and reminded them that we had been waiting 4 weeks for the figures which I am sure everyone in the department and the minister's office was using as the basis for their arguments. What answer did I receive? I was told: 'We decided that we would not give those to you. Thanks for contacting us. If you really want to know the figures, why don't you wait until the Assembly is sitting and ask the Minister. He will be ready to give them to you'. What sort of arrogance is that from the minister's department? There had not been even a phone call or letter of apology indicating that it had been decided not to honour a commitment given 4 weeks earlier. What arrogance, Mr Deputy Speaker!

The minister went on to say that the purpose was to alleviate the 'distress to schools'. Look at the Tiwi School in my electorate. Ironbar, the Leader of Government Business, referred to its being only 900 m to Wanguri Primary School and only 600 m to Nakara Primary School and that only a few students ...

Mr Perron: What are you talking about? He didn't mention that at all.

Mr Reed: You have the wrong speaker.

Mr Setter: I did not mention that at all.

Mr BAILEY: My apologies, Mr Speaker. It was the Attorney-General who used those figures.

It is easy for him to say that it is only a short distance, but what he has failed to point out is that, to reach either of those schools, very young primary school children have to cross a 4-lane road.

Mr Finch: Check the traffic count there.

Mr BAILEY: The traffic flow is not such that a crossing is warranted. However, I am sure that the Minister for Transport and Works is familiar with the stretch of Trower Road near the intersection with Henbury Avenue. Anyone who sat there with a radar gun would find many vehicles passing at speeds of 80 km/h and 90 km/h. At the end of Henbury Avenue, there is a very dangerous blind corner which cars negotiate at very high speeds. Would you tolerate your 5-year-old crossing that road without any support?

Mr FINCH: A point of order Mr Deputy Speaker! In fact, I have 2 points of order. Firstly, the honourable member is not addressing his remarks through the Chair. Secondly, and more pertinently, the honourable member is not addressing himself to the terms of the amendment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is a point of order. I ask the honourable member to address his remarks through the Chair and to address himself to the amendment.

Mr BAILEY: Mr Deputy Speaker, I believe that I am addressing the amendment. The amendment seeks quite clearly to commend the minister for

'alleviating the distress caused to students and parents' by the closure of schools. That is the subject which I am addressing in spite of the interjections from the rabble on the opposite side of the House.

Mr FINCH: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! Notwithstanding the honourable member's pretence at excitement, referring to honourable members on this side of the House as 'rabble' is quite inappropriate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order, but I would ask the honourable member not to shout at the Chair.

Mr BAILEY: The issue we are discussing is very serious. It is hurting many people in the community, and the contempt which the government displays will tell in the future.

The amendment refers to 'ensuring the quality of **education** for all Territory children'. I want to address this in relation to the closure of Tiwi Primary School which will now force primary school children to cross major roads. I would like the minister to give a guarantee that he will accept responsibility for any child who is injured or killed as a result of his penny-pinching moves to impose the rules of his political game on the residents of my electorate.

Mr Finch: You have a very sick head.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BAILEY: The minister made it quite clear in an earlier interjection that he has not made an effort to visit Tiwi Primary School because, for some reason or other, the fact that I am the local member has affected his ability to talk to people there. He said something similar on a number of occasions when he went to Wagaman Primary School. He said that the reactions of school councils and local communities would determine many of his decisions and their effects on schools.

Mr Stone: interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: The minister made threats. At Wagaman Primary School, he said that the school might be saved from closure if it was prepared to accept the preschool being moved into the primary school.

Mr Stone: It was not even put to them that night.

Mr BAILEY: The same issue was raised again at the meeting of the Wagaman Primary School Council, which the member for Jingili referred to earlier. It was suggested that these razor gang activities would continue year after year and that any school which stood up in support of the schools now being closed might be next on the hit list.

In our arguments today, we have demonstrated that the agenda has been driven as much by political expediency as anything to do with financial savings. Certainly, it has had nothing whatsoever to do with **education**. The member for Port Darwin has no credibility as Minister for Education. He has proved that he has no interest in education, and he is a disgrace to the profession to which he once belonged.

In terms of other effects on individuals in the community, the honourable minister has failed to deal with

issues such as the design and layout of schools within the suburbs of Darwin.

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Mr Stone: Is that my fault too?

Mr BAILEY: The northern suburbs were planned in such a way that a small shopping centre, a school, an oval and sometimes medical facilities etc comprised a central focus for each suburb. Some of the schools built in those areas were built to cater for specific numbers of students coming from suburbs which did not yet have schools or they were designed in times when there was perceived to be much greater need to supply education services.

The minister is now attempting to argue that, because schools are larger than they need to be to meet the needs of particular suburbs, such schools should be closed. He does not suggest that we should attempt to find other uses for areas which are not being used specifically for teaching. He does not attempt to follow the educational ethic which placed a school in each suburb. The schools should have been designed around the number of students which were expected in the suburbs. The minister now defends Larrakeyah Primary School in his own electorate. That is fine. The school is appropriate for the population size it is servicing. Does he suggest that, if we tacked 4 additional classrooms on that school, it should be closed because it would be less utilized than it should be? Because Larrakeyah Primary School is slightly smaller than other schools and is closer to full ...

Mr Stone interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: The number of students in the schools which you are talking about closing are comparable with, say, the numbers at Larrakeyah.

Mr Stone: Do you want me to close it too?

Mr BAILEY: I do not want any of them to close. The member for Jingili suggested that schools reach a stage at which they no longer offer adequate educational services and that, by amalgamating services, somehow or other they can offer a better education program.

Mr Stone: interjecting.

Mr BAILEY: The chairman of your ministerial task force stated quite clearly at the Tiwi Primary School Council meeting that none of the 4 urban primary schools due for closure were in any way offering **education** programs inferior to those of any other primary school in the Northern Territory. He said quite clearly that there was no indication whatsoever that there would necessarily be an increase in **educational** opportunity for students forced to move to other schools. The minister talks about efficiency, but he cannot produce any figures which give any indication of what efficiencies will be gained by amalgamating primary schools. You still have the same number of ...

Mr Stone: I spoke about Hugh Hudson's report.

Mr BAILEY: Hugh Hudson's report refers to much smaller schools than those which you are closing.

We are saying that all of the 4 schools due for closure are of a size which can viably offer classes equal to those in a larger school. Classes at Tiwi, Rapid Creek, Karguru and Traeger Park are as big as classes in any other primary school. No efficiencies will be achieved by amalgamating these schools with other schools. However, efficiencies could be achieved if the Department of Education continued to do what it started to do last

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year in terms of moving education personnel into schools to fill up some of the empty space instead of lining the pockets of private entrepreneurs who own office space around the town.

Mr Stone: They will be glad to hear you say that. You want to support the private sector, don't you?

Mr BAILEY: Why was that money wasted last year? If the government owns buildings, the government should use them. Why should you waste government money simply to support the private ...

Mr Stone: Do you want us to walk away from new leases?

Mr BAILEY: Recently, you have renewed private leases when you had the opportunity to use vacant space in Education Department schools?

Mr Stone: Examples. Come on, give us an example.

Mr BAILEY: Last year, Tiwi Primary School was all set to hand over 2 major teaching areas to the student services section. I believe that Millner Primary School was also organizing to hand over school space to personnel of the Department of Education. At the last minute, after money had been spent on drawing up plans and contracts, nothing happened. Money was wasted. Those departmental personnel could easily have moved into those schools. It would have been quite appropriate and the students and families in those areas would still have a local community school offering quality education services without any money being wasted.

There is no proof that the minister's proposals will save any money. Who will maintain the grounds of the closed schools? The minister said that his department will do it, but it will not spend any money. Someone will have to spend some money. The buildings will deteriorate. The minister has said that they will not be bulldozed. Someone will have to maintain them somehow.

Mr Stone: We will put them to community use.

Mr BAILEY: How will community groups look after those facilities? Most of them are largely reliant on government funding.

I am aware that my time is running out and I would like to comment on a few other effects of closing a local school. Tiwi Primary School includes a unit for the visually impaired. It not only services all of the Territory, but specifically it services the needs of visually-impaired children at the school. Most of those students live either in Tiwi or around the northern suburbs and, in some cases; parents have actually

made a decision to move closer to the school. They will now be told that, somehow or other, they will have to get their children to Stuart Park.

The Daisy Yarmirr Hostel is also located in Tiwi. It exists primarily to meet the needs of Aboriginal people from remote communities who come to Darwin when a member of their family or community has to spend an extended period in the Royal Darwin Hospital. Up to 20 children who stay at Daisy Yarmirr Hostel with their parents each year attend Tiwi Primary School for periods of about 10 weeks. One of the reasons why the hostel was located there was that there was a school close by.

A number of families have been located in Tiwi by the Housing Commission because they have priority listings for proximity to the hospital. This is

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because individuals within those families are invalids or need very close access to medical facilities. Many of those people are in a low socioeconomic group and do not own cars. The public transport system in the area is inadequate in terms of transporting children to the 2 schools which are alternatives to Tiwi. As usual, this government has picked on the weakest sections of the community - children, the aged, invalids and Aboriginals - for the benefit of the rich. I issue a challenge to the ministers opposite. In the context of the ERC cuts, I challenge each of them to give up 1 of their many ministerial advisers, consultants, public relations officers or whatever and not to close any schools.

Mr SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr BELL (MacDonnell): Mr Speaker, I intend to take the opportunity to speak to the amendment as well as to urge on honourable members the virtues of the censure motion that I moved this morning. I believe that the government and the minister in particular, do not have a leg to stand on. The economies that this government has sought to place on the Northern Territory have been economies that it had no mandate to place. I believe that all opposition speakers have made very powerful cases, either in respect of their individual electorates or more broadly, why this motion should succeed.

I believe that the government pulled the wool over the eyes of the Northern Territory electorate in its election campaign in October last year. There was not a word to the voters about the possibility of school closures nor about the possibility that the education of their children would be thrown into massive disarray in the way that we have seen in the first few months of this school year. That will continue as families seek possible ways to do the best by their kids. This government has sold them out, and sold them out in spades. The very terms that the minister uses in seeking to defend himself against the substance of this motion give the lie to the very claims he makes. He uses terms like 'task force'. Let us look at the term 'task force'. It implies a degree of forward planning that has been absolutely absent from this whole exercise. I do not mean to urge bad faith on all the officers who have been involved in it. They have been forced to administer an irresponsible government decision.

Earlier in this morning's debate, I tabled a copy of the procedures and criteria for closure of schools. That refers to the annual review of schools. For example, as a matter of policy, Band 3 urban schools whose enrolment numbers are 170 or less are to be reviewed annually by a standing committee consisting of the deputy secretary (schools) as the chairman, the regional superintendent, the departmental demographer and the Northern Territory COGSO nominee. In addition, there is to be a nominee of the school council of

the affected school, and the principal of the school. That does not happen. That was 1985's policy. It is not heard about now. Last year, an election was held. That election was preceded by a budget. That budget made no mention whatsoever of the possibility of school closures nor of any alteration in staff-student ratios. This type of proposal has never been adhered to and the minister has the gall to rise in this Assembly and suggest that somehow a responsible process has been put in train. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the opposition has made its case well and truly.

Throughout his speech this morning, the Minister for Education was clutching at straws. He made a couple of comments that really need to be nailed down. He said the community must ask itself whether it was prepared to pay the cost of keeping small schools open. I will quote him directly

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from the nicely written speech that he delivered to us this morning. He said: 'How much is the community prepared to pay to keep open small schools?' My answer is that the community ought to be given the chance to address the question, but that chance has never been given. The Minister for Education stands condemned by this parliament and by the people of the Northern Territory for attempting to defend a decision from which he should have the courage to stand aside. This is the type of decision on which he should be prepared to offer his resignation.

Let me come to another point in the minister's speech. He said that it was COGSO that persuaded the government to defer the closures until the end of the year. That was quite an admission because it sounded to me as though the boys got together in NT House and said: 'April will be okay. That is 6 months after the election and 3½ years before we have to call the next one. The mugs will have forgotten. Let's close them now'.

Mr Vale: Don't refer to Territorians as mugs.

Mr BELL: I know that the member for Braiting is pretty slow himself but, if I speak a little more slowly, perhaps he will be able to concentrate on what I am saying. What I was saying was that those were the terms that he and his Cabinet colleagues were using.

The Minister for Education has confessed out of his own mouth that, far from himself convincing Cabinet that there ought to be any deferral of those closures, both he and the Cabinet had to be pushed into it by COGSO. I should mention in passing that the efforts that COGSO and COGSO officers, particularly the energy and integrity that Mr Creswick has put into this issue, deserve the highest commendation from this Assembly. I believe that the honorary positions that he and other officers of COGSO hold do a great service to all students in Territory schools, and to their parents, by representing forcefully the interests of parents with respect to the education of children.

The honourable minister attempted to say that COGSO had acceded to the closure of schools. I believe the COGSO position is that there may be circumstances in which some schools could close. In respect of the schools in the member for Barkly's electorate - and I refer particularly to Kiana, Warrego and Ganjarani - the debate about closure was of an entirely different order from the debate about the merits of the closure of, for example, Rapid Creek and Traeger Park Primary Schools.

While I am on the subject of Traeger Park Primary School, let me pick up a comment made earlier. It may

have been made by the member for Greatorex or perhaps it was an interjection from the member for Braitling. It was about the lack of parental involvement at Traeger Park Primary School.

Mr Vale: It was not me.

Mr BELL: It may not have been the member for Braitling, but certainly an interjection was made. It may have been made by the honourable minister himself, suggesting that lack of interest on the part of parents was one of the reasons for the demise of the school.

I suggest that we look very carefully at the nature of parental involvement with school councils. The simple fact is that it is much easier for well-educated, middle-class people to be involved with school councils. It is less easy for people who have not received a full dose of secondary schooling, let alone had the advantage of tertiary **education**, who are less

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confident in speaking even in quite small public forums, to be involved in school councils. Members of the Legislative Assembly are notoriously self-confident in that regard. I suggest to you, Mr Deputy Speaker that the largely Aboriginal clientele of a school like Traeger Park Primary School and their parents do not feel equally comfortable in forums of that kind, and nobody should understand that better than people like the member for Braitling. I am less sure about the instincts of the member for Greatorex in that regard, who is notoriously intolerant in that way.

Mr VALE: A point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker! I was sitting in the gallery when the member for Greatorex was speaking and most of the comments that the honourable member for MacDonnell is claiming that I made were made by the member for Greatorex. If the member for MacDonnell wishes to quote honourable members, let him at least be accurate.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order.

Mr BELL: Mr Deputy Speaker, the member for Braitling has interjected a number of times during this debate. In future, if he wants to avoid my commenting on his points of view, he should not interject. If I comment inaccurately, he has the opportunity to contribute or to make a personal explanation. After 15 years in this Assembly, he should know what the forms of the House are. He has every opportunity to make a personal explanation.

The students of Traeger Park Primary School put on a very impressive demonstration. In concluding this debate, let me put this on the record. Do not imagine that, when the government's amendment is passed and, unfortunately, this eminently sensible motion of censure against the minister is rejected, that that will be the end of it. I signal to every person in the Territory and certainly every government member in this Assembly that the battle for those schools will continue. It will not cease when we have a division on this debate. We will not just go off to dinner and forget about it. I feel very strongly about the interests of parents in obtaining quality **education** for their kids, and I want the minister to be under no illusion about the fact that I will give every support to those schools that believe, quite reasonably, that the decision to close them has been taken unreasonably by a government that has no mandate to do so.

Mr Finch: What do you mean?

Mr BELL: No mandate to do so. It is a shame you were not here to hear what I had to say earlier. Because of that lack of a mandate, because the government did not take this to the people in October last year, the Minister for Education is living a lie.

I want to stress the disproportionate nature of these reductions. The claim that the highest proportion of these reductions will occur outside the school fence is not defensible. To use the minister's metaphor, I believe that 70% of those cuts will impact within the school fence as was shown by the figures I gave. I am not sure how useful that metaphor is because, of course, the impact within the school fence of the cutting of curriculum and support services cannot be assessed. I am not sure that the metaphor deserves the sort of credence the minister would give to it.

The minister made a fulsome defence of devolution. In support of this motion, I would like to make a few comments about devolution and some of the principles involved. The minister said in his speech, in rather fulsome tones, that the government is handing control of schools over to the communities. Some of those among us who are a little more realistic may in

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fact interpret this as the government washing its hands of responsibility for the provision of quality public **education**. I certainly believe that many of the decisions associated with this do mean that. School councils are comprised of volunteers - people who attend meetings weekly, fortnightly or monthly and who have full-time jobs. They are not in a position necessarily to supervise contracts or to make tough professional decisions about the application of funding for relief teachers. In fact, it is probably worth flagging a future debate in this regard. A large number of issues involved here that have not been debated and that are not able to be debated in the context of this motion. Each one of them deserves a debate of this length. I ask you, Mr Deputy Speaker, how you would view the idea of making a decision about the application of funds for a relief teacher? If a teacher in a given subject happens to be absent, what are the virtues of employing somebody to replace them or otherwise?

Mr Coulter: Who do you say should make that decision?

Mr BELL: I will pick up the interjection. If a class does not have a teacher for a subject, there is an **educational** decision to be made. Is it to be for one 30-minute session or is it to be for 3 weeks or 6 weeks or a semester? There is obviously a point at which an educational decision, a decision about the quality of education being provided for that class...

Mr Stone: That stays with the minister under the current proposal.

Mr BELL: Mr Speaker, if those decisions are made by the minister now, they will be transferred to school councils. There needs to be a little more public debate about that instead of a raft of decisions being handed down as has occurred. The so-called devolution proposals are really the government washing its hands of responsibility. That is not a responsible approach to public education. Obviously I have not convinced government members in that regard.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! There is too much cross-Chamber chatter.

Mr BELL: I do not believe there was anybody interjecting from this side of the House. It is funny that, when the government interjects, it is always judged to be coming from both sides.

Members interjecting

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I distinctly heard interjections on both sides of the House.

Mr BELL: I thought that was just me speaking, Mr Deputy Speaker.

In conclusion, I draw attention once again to the rationalization of expenditure document, to the large number of issues involved in that and to the failure of the government to carry out constructive public debate on those issues. I draw to the attention of this Assembly the government's attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of the Territory by failing to address these issues in the election context.

Let me give one final little serve to the member for Nightcliff. Of all the mealy-mouthed loads of nonsense that I have ever heard, that was the worst. Good grief! If he has the gall to rise in this Assembly and attempt to lend credence to the decisions of his government when, in fact, he very well knows that an active decision was taken by the Cabinet, of which he was a member, not to run these issues before the election, he deserves

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condemnation in his own terms. In the meantime, it is simply the Minister for Education who should resign, if he has the interest of quality education for Territorians at heart. The government has no mandate for these changes. The minister and the government of which he is a part are living a lie.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the amendment be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16 Noes 9

Mr Collins	Mr Bailey
Mr Coulter	Mr Bell
Mr Dondas	Mr Cartwright
Mr Finch	Mr Ede
Mr Hatton	Mrs Hickey
Mr McCarthy	Mr Lanhupuy
Mr Manzie	Mr Smith
Mr Ortmann	Mr Stirling
Mrs Padgham-Purich	Mr Tipiloura
Mr Palmer	
Mr Perron	
Mr Poole	
Mr Reed	

Mr Setter
Mr Stone
Mr Vale

Amendment agreed to.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: The question is that the motion, as amended, be agreed to.

The Assembly divided:

Ayes 16 Noes 9

Mr Collins Mr Bailey
Mr Coulter Mr Bell
Mr Dondas Mr Cartwright
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Mr Hatton Mrs Hickey
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Mr Manzie Mr Smith
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Mrs Padgham-Purich Mr Tipiloura
Mr Palmer
Mr Perron
Mr Poole
Mr Reed
Mr Setter
Mr Stone
Mr Vale

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

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Reference:

<http://notes.nt.gov.au/lant/hansard/HANSARD6.NSF/0044d01ca7b2aec748255fcd0024659c/f87e2b7dda861960692571f800006c77?OpenDocument&Highlight=0,education>