



# ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C

## 2004

### 1. INTRODUCTION

By sessional orders adopted by the Legislative Assembly on 20 May 2004, Estimates Committee C was appointed to examine and report on the proposed expenditure for the organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Minister for Education and the Arts.

The committee conducted a public hearing on Thursday, 15 July 2004 to take evidence from the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations and the Minister for Education and the Arts. The transcript of the public hearing can be accessed at the Queensland Parliament's Hansard web-page at <www.parliament.qld.gov.au>.

To examine the proposed expenditure for the organisational units allocated to it, the committee considered information obtained at the public hearing in conjunction with: budget papers and Ministerial Portfolio Statements (MPS) tabled by the Treasurer; written responses to questions on notice submitted to the Ministers by the committee prior to the public hearing; and other information provided by the Ministers.

Accompanying this report is a volume of 'Additional Information' presented by the committee to the Legislative Assembly. The additional information includes the minutes of the committee's meetings, and answers to questions on notice asked before and during the public hearing.

### 2. DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The MPS states that the Department of Employment and Training delivers on the Queensland Government's Smart State Strategy by boosting the skill and qualification levels of the State's diverse

population to support individual, industry and community prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

The total appropriation for the Department of Employment and Training is \$615,084,000.

The MPS provides the following output summary:<sup>2</sup>

OUTPUT	TOTAL COST \$'000
Employment Initiatives	94,201
Vocational Education and Training Services	827,039
<b>Total</b>	<b>921,240</b>

#### 2.2 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights in the budget as proposed by the Department of Employment and Training for the 2004-05 year include:<sup>3</sup>

- \$83.6m for a range of integrated training and services programs as part of the three year *SmartVET* initiative including \$29m to trial new initiatives and \$54.6m for the enhancement and growth of existing programs;
- extension of the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative for a further three years at an additional cost of up to \$278m;
- allocation of a further \$1.5m to training initiatives to promote best practice in the sugar industry and address the skill development needs of participants leaving the industry;
- in excess of \$78m to the delivery of recognised training to 15-17 year old Queenslanders, as outlined in the Government's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* initiative;
- a further \$37.1m investment in TAFE Queensland facilities; and

<sup>1</sup> Queensland Government, *Ministerial Portfolio Statements: Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations*, Budget 04-05, 2004 at 1-1.

<sup>2</sup> Note 1 at 1-9. Sources of revenue other than output revenue include user charges and Commonwealth revenue.

<sup>3</sup> Note 1 at 1-3 to 1-5.

- an increase in funding to \$8m for the delivery of employment and training services to Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders.

### 2.3 PUBLIC HEARING

During the public hearing the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations responded to questions from the committee in relation to a wide range of matters, including:

- programs to address skill shortages in key industry areas;
- enrolments in skill shortage areas at TAFE and other training providers;
- the number of registered training providers;
- the role of the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative in meeting skill shortages;
- plans for further investment in the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle* initiative;
- number of apprentices and trainees currently in training;
- accelerated apprenticeship training places;
- the new *SmartVet* initiative;
- budget allocations for TAFE Queensland;
- the *Get Set for Work Program* to assist 15-17 year olds;
- percentage completion rates of apprenticeships and traineeships;
- funding to industry training advisory bodies;
- establishment of *Skilling Solutions Queensland*;
- impact of additional funding under the user choice *Apprenticeship and Traineeship Training Program*;
- school based apprenticeships and traineeships;
- funding for the *Start Up Program* to assist disadvantaged young unemployed people;
- vocational and educational training for the manufacturing industry; and
- the *Queensland Takes Off* strategy and establishment of Aviation Australia Pty Ltd.

## 3. DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Industrial Relations is the lead agency for industrial relations, workplace health and

safety and electrical safety. The MPS states that the purpose of the Department of Industrial Relations is 'to lead policy development and service delivery that supports safer, fairer and more productive work environments in Queensland'.<sup>4</sup>

The total appropriation for the Department of Industrial Relations is \$53,640,000.

The MPS provides the following output summary:<sup>5</sup>

OUTPUT	TOTAL COST \$'000
Workplace Health and Safety Services (including Workers' Compensation Policy)	45,457
Private Sector Industrial Relations Services	22,141
Administration of the Industrial Court and Commission System	6,656
Electrical Safety Services	7,828
Public Sector Industrial and Employee Relations Services	5,246
<b>Total</b>	<b>87,328</b>

### 3.2 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights in the budget as proposed by the Department for the 2004-05 financial year include:<sup>6</sup>

- \$5.2m per year additional ongoing funding to assist in addressing the cost of workplace injury and disease;
- ongoing additional funding of \$0.93m per year to enhance compliance with industrial relations legislation and ensure that enforcement activities continue to have an impact on the Queensland labour market;
- allocation of an additional \$0.20m per year to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission;
- additional funding of \$0.17m per year to enhance training support for Queensland public sector employees; and
- capital funding of \$0.35m to upgrade the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission information technology and business systems and the Government On-Line Delivery (GOLD) project.

<sup>4</sup> Note 1 at 2-1.

<sup>5</sup> Note 1 at 2-7. Sources of revenue other than output revenue include user charges and other revenue.

<sup>6</sup> Note 1 at 2-2 and 2-3.

### 3.3 PUBLIC HEARING

During the public hearing the Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations answered questions from the committee in relation to a wide range of matters, including:

- Queensland workplace agreements;
- the number of workplace health and safety prosecutions;
- employment of additional industrial inspectors;
- estimates of audits to be carried out by industrial inspectors;
- use of funds for Workplace Health and Safety services;
- initiatives to address workplace health and safety concerns in the building and construction industry;
- initiatives and strategies to enhance compliance with industrial relations legislation;
- current levels of industrial disputation in Queensland;
- workplace health and safety compliance audits on amusement devices;
- timeliness of workplace health and safety investigations;
- past expenditure and allocated funding for the Work and Family project pilot program;
- the financial position of WorkCover;
- trends in workers' compensation claims;
- incidence of compensated work related fatalities;
- the Productivity Commission's report into workers' compensation and workplace health and safety;
- strategies to address workers' compensation claims related to psychosocial injuries;
- action to address exploitation of outworkers in the clothing industry;
- workers' compensation premiums;
- electrical safety contractor audits; and
- national and state wage cases.

## 4. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE ARTS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Department of Education and Arts Queensland are now joined to form the single Department of Education and the Arts. As the MPS states, Education Queensland is the '*management and delivery arm of the department that covers state schooling*'.<sup>7</sup> Its responsibilities include: preschool, primary and secondary education; students with special needs; assistance to non-State education; and assistance to tertiary institutions. There are three statutory authorities covered by the Education area: Queensland Studies Authority; Board of Teacher Registration and Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

The MPS states that the Arts Queensland area of the portfolio: sets policy direction on the Government's investment in arts and culture; develops innovative programs and partnerships; and administers funding and capital works programs. Five statutory authorities support this role: State Library of Queensland; Queensland Art Gallery; Queensland Museum; Queensland Performing Arts Trust; and Queensland Theatre Company.

The total appropriation for the Department of Education and the Arts is \$5,589,896,000.<sup>8</sup>

The MPS provides the following output summary:<sup>9</sup>

OUTPUT	TOTAL COST \$'000
Preschool Education	124,770
Primary Education	2,321,468
Secondary Education	1,504,945
Students with Special Needs	419,330
Assistance to the Arts	86,635
Assistance to Non-State Education	1,007
Assistance to Tertiary Institutions	2,820
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,460,975</b>

<sup>7</sup> Queensland Government, *Ministerial Portfolio Statements: Minister for Education and the Arts*, Budget 04-05, 2004 at 1-1.

<sup>8</sup> Note 7 at 1-17.

<sup>9</sup> Note 7 at 1-19.

## 4.2 BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS

Highlights in the budget for the 2004-05 financial year in area of education include:<sup>10</sup>

- funding of over \$46m for the continuation of the Preparatory Year in trial schools and preparation of the full school implementation in 2007;
- \$14.2m to extend State-wide trials of reforms to the senior phase of schooling and fund a range of initiatives for youth support (including for students at risk of leaving school early) and local education and training programs;
- \$2m as part of a package to further implement flexible schooling options that meet the learning and support needs for young people;
- \$63.4m to improve information communication technologies access and skills for both students and teachers;
- projected employment from Semester 1, 2005 of an additional 589 teachers;
- improved services for students with disabilities, including: \$18m for students with disabilities; an additional \$14m to transition to the new enhanced funding arrangements to support students with disabilities; \$20.2m to continue to enhance special education facilities through the Building Inclusive Schools program; and the establishment of a Ministerial Advisory Committee comprised of students with disabilities;
- \$156m to improve student literacy outcomes in state schools, including further implementation of *Literate Futures* initiatives;
- commitment of \$3.3m as part of a three-year \$14m *Spotlight on Science* initiative to encourage student enrolments in science subjects and the pursuit of further studies in science;
- a four-year \$6.9m Safe and Healthy Schools initiative to promote safety, physical activity and a healthier lifestyle in schools;
- additional funding of \$0.9m to support involvement in Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) Teams in response to the Crime and Misconduct Commission report *Protecting Children*;
- \$336.7m investment in state schools and facilities, as well as building improvement programs;

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<sup>10</sup> Note 7 at 1-8 to 1-14.

- an estimated \$39.8m to support professional development and training for teachers, teacher aides and other school-based staff; and
- distribution of \$303.4m in recurrent funding for non-state schools.

Highlights in the budget for the 2004-05 financial year in the area of the Arts include:<sup>11</sup>

- \$100m for capital development as part of the *Millennium Arts Project*;
- additional \$4.9m recurrent funding in preparation for the opening of new facilities including the: Queensland Gallery of Modern Art; redeveloped State Library of Queensland; and other *Millennium Arts* projects;
- further funding of \$1.5m to the Queensland Museum for operational support of the Rail Workshops Museum;
- \$1m in capital funding over the next two years for Stage 2 of the Cairns Centre for Contemporary Arts;
- \$1.5 additional recurrent funding for the Pacific Film and Television Commission to support the Domestic Production Fund and new production schemes;
- \$0.38m over the next three years for the Screen Producers' Association of Australia (SPAA) Conference;
- provision of \$0.75m for the Queensland Orchestra for regional touring programs and audience development initiatives; and
- \$0.45m towards the implementation of the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy.

## 4.3 PUBLIC HEARING

At the public hearing, the Minister for Education and the Arts responded to questions from the committee in relation to a wide range of matters, including:

- funding for the *Millennium Arts Project* and benefits of the project;
- budget estimates for the Queensland Theatre Company (QTC);
- QTC regional and outreach programs;
- Arts Queensland grants acquittal policy;
- the *Art Built-In* program and the number of jobs generated for artists and art workers;

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<sup>11</sup> Note 7 at 1-13 to 1-14.

- funding for the film and television industry through the Pacific Film and Television Commission;
- additional funding to the Queensland Orchestra;
- annual investment in public library collections;
- funding for the preparatory year of education;
- evaluation and outcomes of the preparatory year trial;
- teaching and other staff requirements for the full school implementation of the preparatory year commencing in 2007;
- suspension and exclusion of students for substance abuse and related incidents;
- complaint processes in relation to accredited higher education courses;
- international education opportunities in Queensland state schools;
- drug education in schools;
- proposed capital expenditure on the relocation of the Coolangatta Special School;
- programs to support pregnant and parenting young people to complete school;
- safe and healthy schools grants;
- access for disabled students to school buildings;
- student literacy and numeracy rates;
- retention rates for year 8-12 students;
- behaviour management initiatives;
- increases in teacher numbers and its impact in schools;
- distribution of capital works program funds;
- the RRR program (Repainting, Re-roofing and Reticulation);
- accommodation for preparatory year classes;
- the *Smart School Renewal* program;
- the *Wired for the Future* program and its role in supporting students and teachers;
- the upgrade of school toilet facilities;
- the School Improvement Assistance Scheme and the School and Community Capital Innovators Scheme;
- initiatives relating to school security;
- funding for the implementation of *Education and Training Reforms for the Future*;
- trials of the reforms to the senior phase of schooling;

- strategies to increase the number of male teachers in schools;
- the Senior Certificate Project;
- role of the Queensland Studies Authority in the implementation of the senior phase of learning reforms;
- initiatives to support teacher access to information and communication technologies; and
- implementation of the *Middle Phase of Learning State School Action Plan*;
- the *Spotlight on Science* initiative; and
- allocation of resources to special needs students.

## 5. RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditures, as stated in the Appropriation Bill 2004 for the organisational units within the portfolios referred to Estimates Committee C for examination, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

## 6. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The committee thanks Ministers and their staff for their cooperation and assistance during the estimates process.

Geoff Wilson MP  
Chair

16 August 2004

## MEMBERSHIP

Mr Geoff Wilson MP (Chair)  
Mr Marc Rowell MP (Deputy Chair)  
Mrs Peta-Kaye Croft MP  
Mr John-Paul Langbroek MP  
Mr Rob Messenger MP  
Ms Barbara Stone MP  
Honourable Dean Wells MP

## SECRETARIAT

Mr Luke Passfield (Research Director)  
Ms Tania Jackman (Executive Assistant)

# **STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS**

## **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Marc Rowell MP**  
**Shadow Minister for Employment, Training & Industrial Relations**  
**Member for Hinchinbrook**

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The process of Estimates Committee hearings in relation to the Ministerial Program Statement for the Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations highlights yet again the weaknesses in the operations of Estimates Committees in Queensland as a mechanism for scrutinizing expenditures by government Departments.

These weaknesses include:

- The limit on the number of Questions on Notice able to be asked as part of the Estimates process.
- The receipt of replies to such Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual hearing meeting of the Committee.
- The limited time available for the conduct of hearings for each Department thus limiting the capacity of the Parliament to explore issues of concern to finality.
- The limit on each questioning session generally to 20 minutes thus inhibiting the capacity to pursue issues of interest until finality is reached.
- The use by Ministers and Government Members of questions to provide a basis for propaganda statements rather than genuinely exploring issues relating to Departmental Expenditures.
- The failure of Ministerial Program Statements to contain comprehensive, consistent and readily understandable performance standards that are consistently applied on a year by year basis.
- The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
- The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by

Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.

- The use and placement of Departmental Displays behind Estimates Committees reflecting a lack of impartiality in Committee processes and a denial of the capacity of Non-government members to utilise similar opportunities.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee C on 15 July 2004 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- The refusal by the Minister to provide answers on the number of apprentices and trainees that have left industries experiencing skills shortages in order to analyse why this is the case and whether the Government is investing sufficient funding into these priority industries.
- The unwillingness of the Minister to explain why his department consistently provided advice to the Industry Training Advisory Boards on future funding agreements (ITABs) while at the same time consultants had been engaged to develop a funding model for ITABs for 2004-05 which concluded the opposite. Already in to the new financial year and the Minister confirmed that a final decision on the funding for these industry bodies is still yet to be made, which provides no certainty to each ITAB in their important role of identifying training needs for the industry they represent.
- The absolute refusal of the Minister to take any questions on notice, of those asked during the Hearings when he was unable to provide the relevant information.

- The refusal by the Minister to expand the approved list for the *Youth Training Incentives Scheme*, which provides incentives for businesses in rural and remote areas to employ school-based apprentices and trainees. While the district of Bowen is on the approved list, the adjoining Burdekin district as well as Ingham does not qualify under current criteria.

**Marc Rowell MP**  
**Shadow Minister for Employment, Training &**  
**Industrial Relations**

# **STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS**

## **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**Rob Messenger MP  
Member for Burnett**

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  - The Grouping of inappropriate activities in programs and subprograms that inhibit capacity to explore individual activities by government.
  - The failure to permit statutorily independent officers and organizations to be directly responsible to and answer questions directly by Members of Parliament thus undermining their independence from Executive government.
- In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee C on 15 July 2004 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:
- The failure of the Minister to inform the public of the cost blow-out of the Millennium Arts project in December 2003, choosing instead to wait until after the election for a more politically opportune moment.
  - The failure to effectively report on the operations of the Queensland Theatre Company in the Ministerial Portfolio Statement.
  - The Minister's failure to adequately quantify the cost of the prep year, and the subsequent admission that the majority of offsite pre-school buildings will have to be sold-off to off-set the cost of the prep year.
  - The Minister's admission that 590 general classrooms currently used by schools will be converted to prep-year classrooms, and not replaced.
  - The Minister's inability to provide a guarantee that teachers have followed policy and referred all incidents regarding illegal substances to police, and the incapacity to provide any details of the number of critical incidents in schools.
  - The Minister's consistent refusal to commit additional funding for drug education programs, such as Life Education.

- The failure of the Minister to ensure that the necessary checks are carried out on accredited higher education courses.
- Express reservation that lengthy wait times for assessment by speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists were again not addressed satisfactorily.

**Rob Messenger MP**  
**Member for Burnett**

# **STATEMENT OF RESERVATION**

## **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE C**

**John-Paul Langbroek MP B.D.SC (Hons)  
Member for Surfers Paradise**

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### **Department of Industrial Relations**

#### **Amusement Devices**

The Minister for Industrial Relations admitted that “there have been too many incidents” on amusement rides, when discussing the compliance rate of amusement devices in Queensland.<sup>12</sup> The Liberal Party agrees with this assessment and will support whatever measures necessary to reduce the number of injuries on amusement devices. It is of concern to The Liberal Party that when asked what is being done in this field to lift the compliance of amusement devices the Minister provided little concrete evidence of progress in this area.

The Minister’s assertion that “Queensland has been conducting a proactive compliance campaign” was supported by no details as to the elements of that compliance campaign.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the Minister’s contention that the Government is “developing strategies” was an isolated comment not supported by any details of the strategies that are being developed.<sup>14</sup>

This issue is particularly baffling in the sense that the Minister was able to discuss frivolous points such as his liking for wild rides, his relationship with and address of the Showman’s Guild and the fact that his birthday falls on a public holiday. Yet he was unable to use at least part of his three minute response to the question to detailing important aspects of the alleged reforms taking place in this sector.

#### **Timeliness of Prosecutions**

To a separate question on the timeliness of prosecutions, The Liberal Party finds the Minister’s assertions that one “needs to do their homework” as an excuse for poor timeliness in prosecutions as weak.<sup>15</sup> If this is the excuse for having response times for prosecutions at the lower levels of their targeted range,<sup>16</sup> it is the Liberal Party’s contention that the Minister should investigate how to make his department more efficient.

### **Department of Education**

#### **Wheelchair Access at Schools**

In dealing with a question on wheelchair access in schools the Minister said:

Often recommendations are made to parents, ‘We think this school is best for your child for these reasons’, but parents are entitled to enrol their children in any school that they believe is appropriate. So recommendations are made but the parents are not required to go to the recommended school.<sup>17</sup>

If this is indeed the case The Liberal party would support this procedure. Ultimately the State Government has the responsibility to provide wheelchair access to their buildings and parents should not be forced to choose schools on the basis that one school is more capable of catering for a child with a disability than another.

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<sup>12</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 185

<sup>13</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 185

<sup>14</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 185

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<sup>15</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 186

<sup>16</sup> *Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Employment, Training and Industrial Relations* at 2-11

<sup>17</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 212

Reading between the lines of the Minister's response it could be construed that parents are strongly advised to go to one school over another, or, schools that have pre existing facilities over schools where those facilities would have to be erected.

If this is the case it is unacceptable to the Liberal Party. Children should not be forced to go to schools that are further away from home, harder to commute to or where they have no friends simply because that school is better equipped for disabled students. Parents should be able to choose the school of first priority; sound in the knowledge that they can make the assumption disabled access at that school is of an acceptable level.

### **National Benchmarks (Year 3 to Year 5)**

On a question regarding the percentage of Queensland students achieving the national benchmarks for reading, literacy and numeracy the Minister attributed the severe drop, in percentage terms, of students achieving those benchmarks to the fact that "(Queensland) children are up to 12 months younger when they sit these tests and have had up to one year less schooling." The Minister went on to add that this is the "single biggest motivating factor in the government's decision to introduce the prep year."<sup>18</sup>

The Liberal Party supports the concept of the prep year, and agrees with the contention that the prep year is necessary to bring Queensland children to an age and maturity at any given year level similar to that of other states. The same reasoning, however, cannot exclusively be used to explain the drop in results for Queensland children in certain areas of curriculum. It would be my contention that these drops had more to do with syllabus than they do with the age of the students.

As was explained during Estimates Committee C there is a 14.2% drop in the percentage of students reaching the national benchmarks for reading in year 3 as compared with year 5. There is a 6.7% drop between the years 3 and 5 for students achieving the national benchmark for numeracy and there is no change in the percentage of students reaching the national benchmark for literacy.<sup>19</sup> In the absence of evidence showing that age, whether it is learning

capacity or maturity, affects different aspects of learning in different ways, it is insufficient to argue that age is the single biggest factor affecting the percentages of year 3 and year 5 students achieving national benchmarks.

To explain; in the absence of evidence showing that reading is affected by age difference at a greater rate than literacy is affected by age difference, it is incomplete to argue that age is the sole, or even major, reason for the 14.2% drop between year 3 and year 5 of students achieving the national reading benchmark. This reasoning ignores the fact that students achieving the literacy benchmarks are at the same percentage in year 3 as they are in year 5. In the absence of such evidence it can be assumed that age would affect all fields of academia in a similar manner. This, though, is not reflected in the actual results. It is my contention that the reason for the drop in reading achievement has more to do with problems regarding the reading syllabus than it does age. If age was the major factor for the drop in the percentage of students reaching the national benchmarks for reading a similar decrease in students achieving the national benchmark for literacy would have also been noted.

On this point the Liberal Party expresses reservations as to the reading syllabus, and indeed the numeracy syllabus, and a review of these in conjunction with the prep year would yield better results than simply implementing the prep year alone as a method of solving these problems.

**John-Paul Langbroek MP**  
**State Member for Surfers Paradise**

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<sup>18</sup> *Hansard, Estimates Committee C* at 212

<sup>19</sup> *Ministerial Portfolio Statement, Minister for Education and Arts* at 1-37

