



# Estimates Committee E

## 2007

### Report to the Legislative Assembly

#### INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Standing Order 167(3), the Legislative Assembly, by Order made on 23 May 2007, referred to Estimates Committee E for investigation and report certain proposed expenditures contained in the *Appropriation Bill 2007*. Organisational units within the portfolios of the following Ministers were allocated to Estimates Committee E:

- Minister for Education, Training and Minister for the Arts
- Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport

The committee held a public hearing on Tuesday, 17 July 2007. A transcript of the committee's hearing is on the Internet at: <http://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Hansard/>

Prior to the public hearing, the committee put 20 questions on notice to each Minister. Responses to all the questions were received.

The committee has considered the estimates referred to it by examining information contained in:

- the budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- oral evidence taken at the hearing
- documents tabled at the hearing
- answers to questions taken on notice at the hearing

Answers to questions on notice and questions taken on notice at the hearing, together with minutes of the committee's meetings, are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

#### EDUCATION, TRAINING AND THE ARTS

The 2007-08 budget proposes to invest \$6.69 billion in recurrent funding in the education, training and arts sectors and a further \$530 million in infrastructure.

The following table sets out details of the proposed appropriations for the Department in 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	2006-07 \$'000	2007-08 \$'000
Departmental Outputs	3,998,527	4,823,163
Equity Adjustment	298,858	219,626
Administered Items	1,710,409	1,813,648
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>6,007,794</b>	<b>6,856,437</b>

Key education and training funding initiatives in 2007-08, include:

- \$35.6 million over the next four years to improve literacy for students
- \$50 million to support the full implementation of Prep in 2008 through employing more Prep teachers and providing professional development for teaching staff
- \$70 million over four years for state schools and TAFE institutes to provide permanent teachers working two or more days per week with dedicated classroom computers
- \$27.5 million to ICT infrastructure for teachers and students in vocational education and training, providing essential access to new technology
- A \$30 million program over four years to change instruction from Australasian Signed English to Australian Sign Language (Auslan) for Deaf/hearing impaired students
- Establishment of the \$35 million Queensland Academy for Health Sciences
- \$44 million to help school and TAFE teachers improve their professional skills, adapt to new directions in education and training and further their own career development
- Employment of up to an additional 437 full-time equivalents (FTEs) in 2007-08 to meet new growth and deliver new programs
- \$118 million in vocational education and training as part of the four-year \$1 billion Queensland Skills Plan. This will include: \$17.1 million to create 4250 new trades training places state-wide; \$13.4 million for training and career information services; and \$4.5 million to further industry engagement in vocational education and training through Centres of Excellence

- The \$445.5 million Schools' Capital Works Program including:
  - \$188.9 million to construct two new primary schools at West Pacific Pines and Northern Coomera, undertake staged work at 11 schools, acquire land and provide additional classrooms at existing schools in growth areas throughout the State
  - \$31.8 million for the completion of more than 60 new or significantly modified Prep Year classrooms and other minor works to finalise the implementation of Prep
- The continuation of the six-year capital investment program of more than \$300 million as part of the *Queensland Skills Plan*. Projects include:
  - \$33.6 million to continue construction of the \$81.6 million SkillsTech Australia, Acacia Ridge campus
  - \$17.3 million to begin construction of two more SkillsTech Australia specialist training centres in Mackay and Townsville
  - \$2.2 million to refurbish the Cairns campus of Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE
- \$32 million for the redevelopment of the Southbank Institute of Technology, including 14 new and refurbished buildings
- \$5 million as the first stage of an \$11.8 million, four-year initiative to develop School Industry Trade Centres in Far North Queensland, North Queensland, Mackay/Whitsunday and the Gold and Sunshine Coasts

Key arts funding initiatives in 2007-08, include:

- \$1 million for preliminary planning to establish a centre for Smart State innovation and design in Brisbane
- \$9.7 million to fund the Queensland Ballet, the Queensland Theatre Company, the Queensland Orchestra and Opera Queensland
- \$9.6 million to strengthen and develop the small to medium arts sector
- \$112.3 million for the State's flagship cultural institutions comprising:
  - \$46.9 million for the State Library of Queensland
  - \$24.7 million for the Queensland Art Gallery
  - \$18.8 million for the Queensland Museum
  - \$9.7 million for the Pacific Film and Television Commission
  - \$9.1 million for the Queensland Performing Arts Trust

- \$3.1 million for the Queensland Theatre Company

Issues canvassed in questions on notice and at the hearing included:

- additional support for students with disabilities
- the Better Behaviour Better Learning initiative
- chaplaincy and pastoral care services
- capital works for schools and services to schools
- national testing for literacy and numeracy
- programs and initiatives to attract and retain people in traineeships and apprenticeships
- improved training to the state's rural sector - the role of the Australian Agricultural College Corporation and Training Queensland in gaining and maintaining a skilled workforce
- Review of the Pacific Film and Television Commission
- public art in Government buildings and public spaces
- the staffing model for students with disabilities in the special school
- the current minimum standard of facilities for students attending a special school
- progress on the Tomorrow's Schools Providing for a Brighter Future initiative
- increase in employee expenses attributable to enterprise bargaining outcomes in 2007-08
- literacy training to all classroom teachers and teachers aides during 2007-08
- out of court settlements negotiated by the Department and its agencies
- removal of asbestos material from teacher housing and staff accommodation
- contributions by P&Cs to Queensland state schools
- the Queensland Skills Plan
- \$1,000 bonus for apprentices in skills shortage occupations
- monitoring the implementation of Prep during 2007
- supporting Prep students in the classroom through the allocation of teacher aides
- school based apprenticeships and traineeships
- \$20 million for the provision of full-time teacher aides
- Prep class sizes
- employment of an additional 192 full-time equivalent teachers and teacher aides in 2007-08

- transfer of year 10 students to high schools that have a year 12
- the Computers for Teachers program
- Smart State academies
- \$850 million five-year allocation to identify and deliver school renewal and regeneration projects
- school capital works projects
- SkillsTech Australia centres
- staff members under investigation by the Ethical Standards Unit
- cancellation of TAFE courses
- the new Queensland Certificate of Education
- strategies from the Better Behaviour, Better Learning initiative
- professional development for teachers, education leaders and support staff
- reduction of time to complete apprenticeships
- support for state primary school administration staff
- the movement of school registrars
- cooperation between TAFE and Education Queensland to share facilities
- waiting times to access apprenticeship courses
- block training flexibility
- the literacy framework
- the *Education for Sustainable Futures: Schooling for the Smart State* report
- promoting healthy eating in schools
- Smart Moves: physical activity programs in Queensland state schools
- the Cultural Centre at South Bank
- the creation of an ideas and technologies centre for children and young people at the Cultural Centre at South Bank
- the expansion of special schools on the Sunshine Coast
- allegations of bullying by a staff member at the Pacific Film and Television Commission
- government support for delegates to attend the Pacific Edge regional conference
- course completion rates of TAFE students
- staff employed on individual contracts
- education and support needs of students with disabilities
- the Year 7 reading test target
- the Gritty Places Program to adapt disused or underutilised council buildings into spaces suitable for artists

- establishment of an international centre in Brisbane as a hub for Smart State design and innovation
- the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts
- the Revolving Film Finance Fund of the Pacific Film and Television Commission
- rural and remote education centres of excellence
- international student enrolment at Queensland universities

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PLANNING SPORT AND RECREATION

The following table sets out the proposed appropriations for the Department of Local Government, Planning Sport and Recreation in 2007-08 compared to the previous financial year.

	<b>2006-07</b>	<b>2007-08</b>
	<b>\$'000</b>	<b>\$'000</b>
Departmental Outputs	536,974	606,681
Equity Adjustment	7,510	(1,537)
Administered Items	332,318	328,764
<b>Vote Total</b>	<b>876,802</b>	<b>933,908</b>

Some highlights in 2007-08, include:

- major reform and restructure of Queensland's local government sector
- the establishment of a single regional local government authority in the Torres Strait
- \$740 million in State and Australian Government funding through the local government grant and subsidy programs
- \$4.5 million for the regional planning process
- \$10.3 million to support the Home WaterWise Service in South East Queensland
- \$20 million for the South East Queensland Business Water Efficiency Program
- over \$49 million for Mainland and the Torres Strait Indigenous Environmental Health Infrastructure Programs
- \$31.6 million for the continuation of State Government Financial Aid and Environmental Health Worker Programs in indigenous communities
- over \$50 million for the development of community sport and recreation opportunities and facilities across Queensland

Issues canvassed in questions on notice and at the hearing included:

- job security for local council employees where two or more councils are amalgamated or have their boundaries adjusted
- grants paid to indigenous councils - appropriate acquittal of funds
- drought assistance and the Home WaterWise program
- investment in sport and recreation infrastructure across Queensland and sport and recreation participation and development programs
- the development of school based facilities for community use
- the thoroughbred training track subsidy scheme
- the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* reform program
- the regional planning process
- improvements to building and plumbing codes
- allocation to Townsville City Council for the Murray Sports Complex
- departmental assistance in relieving growth pressures in south east Queensland by encouraging major decentralization in the development of alternative regional plans
- incentives to encourage people to relocate to regional parts of Queensland
- the establishment of Local Government Transition Committees
- the local government reform program - polls, surveys, studies, information/ education campaigns or focus groups on the issue of local government reform
- realignment of Size, Shape and Sustainability funding to support the Local Government
- the use of private legal firms by the Department and its agencies
- grants and subsidies
- contracted-out projects undertaken by the Department and associated agencies
- out of court settlements negotiated by the Department and its agencies
- council amalgamations – referendums, appeals and judicial review
- review of the *Local Government Act*
- the Regional Collaboration and Capacity Building Program
- engagement of payment of members of the Local Government Reform Commission
- the Queensland Treasury Corporation’s review of council budgets
- Queensland government funding support for local government
- local transition committees for each area that might be affected by boundary changes arising from the Local Government Reform Commission’s recommendation
- water conservation by businesses
- savings and efficiencies to be gained through council amalgamations
- new government structure proposed for the Torres Strait
- Queensland Government assistance to the Brisbane City Council for water projects
- subsidy programs to local governments to build water infrastructure
- the provision of synthetic race tracks
- financial accountability of indigenous councils
- the Young Athlete Assistance Program
- the Community Partnerships Grants Program
- the 2008 Indy 300
- the percentage of Queensland Academy of Sport athletes selected for national teams
- funding to support and encourage the upgrade of school sporting and recreational facilities
- review of council approved residential developments on flood plains on the Sunshine Coast
- provisions in the local government reform process to manage the debts and liabilities of existing councils
- assistance for amalgamated councils to meet excess staff costs
- federal government support to provide for infrastructure in Indigenous communities
- participation in the department’s sport and recreation programs
- assistance given to the Greyhound Racing Authority and the Queensland Harness Racing Board to progress corporatisation
- projections for housing affordability
- the regional planning process
- future development of the Queensland racing industry
- prize money for country racing in Queensland
- the development of school based facilities for community use through the Major Facilities Program

- the draft statutory regional plan for far-north Queensland
- planning for sustainable regions
- enhancing fire safety in residential care buildings
- accelerating implementation of the Smart electronic Development Assessment system
- high-growth local governments with priority infrastructure plans
- improving local government performance and accountability
- assistance for candidates in the lead-up to the March 2008 local government elections
- the number of councils that were refused a request to Queensland Treasury for loan funds over the last two years and the number of councils that received financial management assistance from the Department of Local Government over the last two years
- programs available for councils that need to cart in water because of the drought

**RECOMMENDATION**

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2007* for the organisational units and portfolios allocated to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk, Chair  
August 2007

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, (Chair)  
Member for Inala

Mr Chris Bombolas MP, \*  
Member for Chatsworth

Mr Stuart Copeland MP  
Member for Cunningham

Mr Howard Hobbs MP  
Member for Warrego

Mr Paul Hoolihan MP  
Member for Keppel

Mr Phil Reeves MP  
Member for Mansfield

Mrs Christine Smith MP \*  
Member for Burleigh

Mr Peter Wellington MP  
Member for Nicklin

**SECRETARIAT**

Mr Rob McBride (Research Director)  
Tania Jackman (Executive Assistant)  
Tamara Vitale (Executive Assistant)

\* Mr Bombolas advised that he was unable to attend the committee's public hearing. On 10 July 2007 the Leader of the House wrote to the committee to advise that, in accordance with Standing Order 170 (1), he had appointed Mrs Smith as a replacement committee member.

## **STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS**

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

**Stuart Copeland MP**

Shadow Minister for Education and Training and Shadow Minister for the Arts

Ms Annastacia Palaszczuk  
Chair  
Estimates Committee E

Dear Ms Palaszczuk,

I refer to the draft report for Estimates Committee E and submit a statement of reservations on the report and some general comments on the process of Estimates Committees hearings.

The Estimates Committee process this year again highlights the significant weaknesses in this process as a mechanism for proper scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. In particular, I express the following general reservations in relation to the Estimates Committee Process:

- The entire structure of the whole Estimates Committee process does not allow detailed analysis of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland Budget.
- There is simply not enough time provided to enable proper and detailed consideration of individual Ministerial Portfolio Statements given the number of programs and expenditure. An entire day per portfolio would still not provide sufficient time given the breadth of some portfolios.
- The limited number of Questions on Notice allowed to be asked on each Ministerial Portfolio Statement prevents the pursuit of important issues.
- Receiving responses to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings severely limits the capacity to further research the completeness and accuracy of answers provided.
- The structured nature of the Committee proceedings into blocks of questions with set times from Government and Non-Government Members prevent Members being able to follow a line of questioning in a logical and consistent manner to finality.
- The inability of Estimates Committees to directly ask questions of Senior Public Service administrators.
- The integrity of the Estimates Committee process is grossly compromised due to amendments made to the *Criminal Code Act 1899* (Qld) in June 2006, which abolished the crime of knowingly providing false evidence to the Legislative Assembly or a committee.

Regarding the portfolios scrutinised by the Committee, the following reservations are raised:

The Minister advised the Committee that there has been no audit completed, no register of asbestos material, no program of planned maintenance and removal in place, and no budget for the removal of asbestos material from teacher accommodation across Queensland. Of greater concern was that the Minister advised the Committee that the issues surrounding asbestos in teacher accommodation had not been raised with him or senior members of his department.

The department has a total of 2236 units of accommodation available including 1859 owned by the department, 286 leased from other government agencies, and 91 leased from the private sector.

The Minister was unable to advise the Committee of the contribution P and C's make to State Schools. The Department does not calculate those contributions to either facilities or to the employment of staff. At a time when there is growing concern about cost shifting from the government to parents; when P and C's are making the decision to employ staff including for the full time prep year; and that facilities are not being adequately maintained; it would be expected that the government should know the extent to which funding is provided from all sources and whether the government is providing the basics for our education system.

The Minister still refuses to commit the government to funding full time teacher aides for prep. All parents and stakeholder groups including the QCPCA, and the QTU have expressed their concern about the lack of teacher aide time in Prep and yet the Minister still refuses to provide the necessary funding.

There are 43 prep classes in Queensland state schools larger than the target of 25 students with a total of 1075 students in those classes. The largest prep class contains 28 students.

The Minister advised that there are no plans to routinely change the location of year 10 students to alternative campuses as in the case of the Cooroora Secondary College to fit with changes to the middle and senior phases of learning. The Minister advised that P-10 schools will continue.

The Minister provided the committee with details of allegations of sexual assault or misconduct by teachers and the timeframes for investigation. He advised that there are currently 380 complaints being handled by the Ethical Standards unit of which 84 are sexual. He advised that complaints can take up to 18 months or more.

It is the Coalitions view that investigations should be completed quickly so vexatious complaints can be dismissed and a teacher return to work, or if substantiated appropriate action taken.

The Minister did not allay concerns that the Tomorrow's Schools program will not be used to rationalise schools as it is determined what facilities will be delivered in a cluster of schools.

The Minister advised that six TAFE courses had been cancelled, affecting 26 students.

The Coalition congratulates the Minister on implementing the Coalitions Healthy Kids Clever Kids policy under the name Smart Moves. The Coalition has been advocating this policy since the February 2004 state election and is happy with its belated introduction.

Under questioning about allegations of staff bullying at the PFTC, including allegations of physical assault and the involvement of Workcover, the Minister advised the Committee that "there was an allegation of bullying but no allegation of physical assault brought by a staff member against a supervisor. An independent person was engaged to investigate the complaint and the complaint was unsubstantiated. I understand some resolution of the issues raised by the person concerned, the complainant, was undertaken".

A subsequent report by Screenhub states that in addition to the private investigation referred to by the Minister, Workcover also investigated the allegations. The report also stated that "Screenhub further understands from sources that despite the Employment Services investigation finding that no workplace harassment had occurred, the resolution also involved an out-of-court settlement". Screenhub also reported that they had confirmed that the Queensland Police did interview a former employee of the Pacific Film and television Commission over an alleged assault. These are serious allegations and the reports in Screenhub appear to contradict the answer given by the Minister to the Committee.

The Minister provided the committee with details of completion rates at TAFE. He advised the completion rate for apprentices is around 65%, and the completion rates for trainees is between 56% and 61%. These completion rates are by the Ministers own admission is lower than would be preferred.

The Coalition continues to be concerned with the level of support provided to students with disabilities and the adverse affects suffered by the change to the Education Adjustment Program. The Minister advised that 70 schools suffered a decrease in funding on essentially the same student profile.

Stuart Copeland  
Member for Cunningham  
Shadow Minister for Education and Training and Shadow Minister for the Arts

## **STATEMENT OF RESERVATIONS**

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Howard Hobbs MP  
Shadow Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk  
Chair  
Estimates Committee E

Dear Ms Palaszczuk,

I would express the following general reservations in relation to the Estimates Committee Process that led to that Report.

- The whole Estimates Committee system does not enable the detailed examination of the expenditures provided for in the Queensland Budget,
- Insufficient time is devoted by each Committee to the performance of its allocated task of reviewing expenditures,
- The limit on the Number of Questions on Notice able to be asked on each Ministerial Program Statement prevents the pursuit of important issues,
- The receipt of replies to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings limits the capacity to analyse the answers and research their failure to provide adequate answers to the questions posed,
- The capacity of Ministers to answer questions in such a manner as to avoid the issue being investigated,
- The inability of Estimates Committees to ask questions directly of senior public service administrators,

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee C on Tuesday 17 July 2007 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory:

- The Minister's policy back flip on the local government reform process, from one of a bi-partisan position supporting the Size, Shape and Sustainability process, to one of wholesale forced amalgamations throughout Queensland,
- The Minister's failure to produce to the Committee a detailed analysis of the benefits to communities and ratepayers of forcing amalgamations upon Local Councils,
- The failure of the Minister to commit to allow communities and Councils to hold referendums to determine how their local area will be governed in the future,
- The lack of tangible evidence provided to the Committee to substantiate the Minister's claims that Local Council's are unsustainable,
- The inadequacy of the Minister to address issues arising from the tabled Morton report, especially how rate payers would benefit from amalgamation when, according to the report, historically rates rise after Councils are amalgamated,
- The refusal of the Minister to give the 17 Councils of the Torres Strait a say in their future governance and self determination.

Howard Hobbs MP  
Member for Warrego  
Shadow Minister for Local Government, Planning and Sport.