



Estimates Committee C

2008

Report to the Legislative Assembly

INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to Standing Order 167(3), the Legislative Assembly, by Order made on 1 May 2008, referred to Estimates Committee C for investigation and report certain proposed expenditures contained in the Appropriation Bill 2008. Organisational units within the portfolios of the following Ministers were allocated to Estimates Committee C:

- The Minister for Education, Training and Minister for the Arts; and
- The Minister for Main Roads and Local Government.

The committee held a public hearing on Thursday, 17 July 2008. 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 of 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.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

The 2008-09 budget proposes to invest \$7.03 billion in recurrent funding in the education, training and arts sectors and a further \$833.8 million in infrastructure. The proposed appropriations for the Department of Education, Training and the Arts in 2008-09 as compared to the previous financial year are set out in the following table:

Department of Education, Training and the Arts	Budget 2007-08 \$'000	Budget 2008-09 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Outputs	4,823,163	5,101,469
Equity Adjustment	219,626	288,301
<i>Administered Items</i>	1,813,648	2,000,429
<u>Vote</u>	6,856,437	7,390,199

Key education, training and the arts funding initiatives and investments in 2008-09 include¹:

- \$89.6 million to construct four new schools
- \$150 million towards the \$850 million *State Schools of Tomorrow* initiative to deliver new and renewed facilities to older schools
- \$125.1 million for school maintenance
- \$26.2 million to acquire, refurbish and maintain staff and teacher accommodation
- \$23 million to complete covered walkways of Prep facilities at state schools within South-East Queensland
- Employing up to an additional 321 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, of which 270 are teachers and teacher aides
- Encouraging adoption of the Queensland College of Teachers' *Continuing Professional Development* program
- Implementing the *Believe Achieve Succeed* strategy to improve educational and life outcomes for the state's most disadvantaged students through initiatives such as multi-disciplinary intervention teams and delivery of enhanced teacher development
- \$18m for *Literacy – the Key to Learning: Framework for Action 2006-2008* in schools

¹ 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements - Department of Education, Training and the Arts 2-5-2-6.

- \$10 million [of \$35.6 million over four years] to provide intensive literacy support for upper primary students requiring extra assistance
- \$3 million [from \$12 million over four years] to begin developing phase two of the *Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Framework* and national literacy and numeracy assessment programs in Queensland schools
- Developing regional plans, in consultation with indigenous community members, to address regional issues and to set targets to assist indigenous students
- \$20.7 million funding for 2008-09 for the pre-Prep early learning program in 35 indigenous communities
- \$2.5 million for 2008-09 towards the \$10 million, four-year *Indigenous Education Support Structures* pilot to improve student achievement in five clusters of state schools, and as funding for non-state schools to support this initiative
- \$10.9 million for 2008-09 to support students with disabilities
- \$6.4 million for 2008-09 to continue the transition to Australian Sign Language (Auslan) as the language of instruction for deaf/hearing impaired students who sign
- Over \$100 million in *Smart Classrooms* initiatives, to improve electronic access to learning materials
- \$20 million for 2008-09 towards the *Computers for Teachers* program to deliver a dedicated classroom computer and associated professional development to every permanent state school and TAFE institute teacher working two or more days a week
- \$0.6 million to increase awareness of the link between physical activity and academic achievement and to encourage the inclusion of physical activity in curriculums
- Over \$47 million for staff professional development
- \$1.5 million for 2008-09 to support secondary students (and their families) when they are studying away from their remote homes in the Torres Strait, Cape York and Palm Island
- \$2.1 million for 2008-09 to increase the number of school-based apprenticeship and traineeship (SATs) commencements to 12,400 by December 2009
- In furtherance of the \$1 billion *Queensland Skills Plan*, address skills shortages by funding additional training places and by funding a range of industry engagement models
- \$186.5 million to train apprentices and trainees and to create an extra 17,000 trade training places by 2010
- \$54.7 million for flexible and modern training facilities for SkillsTech Australia and to plan and construct training centres
- \$12 million for construction of the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE's Coomera Education Precinct for creative industries
- \$9.6 million for the small-to-medium arts sector
- \$2.7 million for the *Backing Indigenous Arts* program to support economic, social and creative opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in Far North Queensland
- Implementing the Council of Australian Government's national education and training initiatives, including initiatives for digital education, trades training centres in schools, the study of Asian languages and culture, the lifting of secondary attainment rates and the harmonization of industry licensing requirements with vocational education and training outcomes
- Improving disability access at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC) and refurbishing the Lyric Theatre, Concert Hall and public spaces at QPAC
- Transform the Cultural Centre auditorium into a creative ideas and technology centre, *The Edge*, for people aged 14 to 25
- \$4 million in 2008-09 to implement the art+place public art program to create innovative and animated public spaces
- A further \$1.3 million per annum to support Queensland's signature festivals - the Queensland Music Festival, the Brisbane Festival and the Out of the Box Festival
- \$1.14 million for 2008-09 for the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy
- \$118.4 million for the State Library, Queensland Art Gallery, Queensland Museum, Pacific Film and Television Commission, Queensland Performing Arts Trust and Queensland Theatre Company
- Implementing initiatives to support the *National Education and Arts Statement*

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

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Implementation of the prep year
- The billion dollar *Queensland Skills Plan*
- The risk of asbestos in staff accommodation
- Staff accommodation safety and security audits and upgrades
- The roof replacement program for schools
- Assaults against teachers and other EQ staff
- Student misbehaviour incidents and their handling/treatment
- The number of new enrolments at secondary schools
- School retention rates for senior students
- Capital works investment for the building and expansion of schools
- The 5 year *State Schools of Tomorrow* initiative
- Proposed school closures under the *State Schools of Tomorrow* program
- School industry trade centres
- Energy efficiency and the *Solar Schools Program*
- Energy audits in schools
- The *Smart Moves* physical activity program
- The *OneSchool* database for information management
- The federal government's education revolution reforms including- computers for secondary students, trade training centres, extra vocational training places, access to early childhood education programs, an increase in the year 12 or equivalent attainment rate, the development of a national curriculum and the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program
- The *National Secondary School Computer Fund* and the rollout of broadband network access
- Electronic access to learning materials
- The cost to rollout the Federal Government's *Digital Education Revolution*
- The total number of prep classes
- Teacher aides
- The maintenance budgets for schools and yet to be completed maintenance work
- Behaviour management in classrooms
- Positive behaviour initiatives in schools, including the *Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support Program*
- The *Code of School Behaviour*
- The *Better Behaviour Better Learning* Professional Development Suite for teachers
- The *Essential Skills for Classroom Management* course
- Alternative education options, including positive learning centres and alternative education programs to assist students to reintegrate into mainstream schooling or into more appropriate learning or vocational pathways
- Teacher registration requirements and professional development of staff including the Queensland College of Teachers' new professional development framework
- Education Queensland's new Professional Development and Leadership Institute
- Teacher scholarship programs for priority specialist areas such as special education, industrial design, senior maths and science
- International student performance benchmarks
- Social, economic and educational disadvantage
- Indigenous education, achievement levels for indigenous students and regional indigenous education plans
- Consolidation of multi-campus colleges in the Torres Strait
- The *Believe, Achieve, Succeed* strategy
- The *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*
- The *Queensland Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Framework* [QCAR]
- The Queensland Certificate of Education
- Nambour Special School
- Funding formulas used for special schools and student to teacher/teacher aide ratios
- Specialist assistance to students with disabilities and the acquisition of specialist equipment to support students with disabilities
- The *Green and Healthy Schools Program*
- The Australian Agricultural College Corporation
- Skilling Solutions Queensland centres
- SkillsTech Australia as a trade and technical skills institute and trade training centre
- Construction and refurbishment of TAFE facilities
- TAFE governance
- Teaching vacancies within the TAFE sector
- The *Teach your Trade* recruitment and retention program to target trade teachers in critical trade areas
- TAFE students and block training

- Unmet apprentice training demand
- The apprenticeship hotline
- Apprentice accommodation subsidies
- Early completion incentives for apprentices
- School based apprentices and trainees
- Coomera TAFE Marine training precinct
- Mining industry skills shortages, training for the mining industry and the Mining Industry Skills Centre
- The Federal Government's cessation of funding for Australian Technical Colleges
- *Learning for Life* centres
- The Crime and Misconduct Commission inquiry into allegations of misconduct by a former Director-General of the Department of Employment and Training

THE ARTS

- The Andy Warhol and Picasso exhibitions
- Funding under the Small to Medium Organisations Program
- Competition for funding and funding reductions/withdrawals
- A touring arts strategy
- Expressions Dance Co.
- The Gallery of Modern Art
- Redevelopment of the State Library
- Refurbishment of the Lyric Theatre
- Refurbishment of the Concert Hall and public spaces of the Queensland Performing Arts Centre [QPAC], including improving disability access at QPAC
- *The Edge* creative ideas and technology centre for young people
- The *arts culture + me* Children and Young People in the Arts Action Plan
- The *Starburst* mentoring program connecting young people with artists
- The \$12 million public art fund 'art + place'
- Visitor attendance figures at cultural facilities
- The *Out of the Box* festival for children
- Funding for iconic Queensland arts and cultural festivals
- The *Backing Indigenous Arts* program
- Establishment of the Cairns Indigenous Arts marketplace, the Cairns Printmaking Centre and the Weipa arts hub.

MAIN ROADS

The following table sets out the proposed appropriation for the Department of Main Roads in 2008-09 compared to the previous financial year.

Department of Main Roads	Budget 2007-08 \$'000	Budget 2008-09 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Outputs	1,170,633	1,263,590
Equity Adjustment	1,360,622	1,575,670
<i>Administered Items</i>		
<u>Vote</u>	2,531,255	2,839,260

Key initiatives and investments for the portfolio of main roads for 2008-09 include²:

- Commencement of planning and design for upgrades to the Bruce Highway
- The Ipswich Motorway upgrade (including planning, land acquisition and completion of the Logan Motorway Interchange)
- Completing construction of the South West Arterial
- Completing construction of key roads in the Sunshine Coast and upgrading of the Sunshine Motorway
- Commencement of the realignment of the Dawson Highway at the Calliope Range
- Completing construction of the Townsville Ring Road, the Hospital Bridge in Mackay, and the Ward River and Woolshed Gully Bridges near Charleville
- Completion of corridor level planning to develop long-term (20 year) strategies for five state priority routes
- Initiatives to directly target South East Queensland (SEQ) population growth demands and urban congestion
- Improving safety for road users and workers
- Reducing road trauma through road network safety improvements and vehicle rest areas
- Developing solutions for the state-controlled road network to alleviate traffic congestion
- Adopting a state-wide approach to preserving and maintaining the road network
- In partnership with the federal Government, provide a better national road network

² 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Agency Service Delivery Statements – Department of Main Roads 2-159 – 2-160

- Improving freight efficiency and heavy vehicle safety through the implementation of two national initiatives – the *Intelligent Access Program* (IAP) and *Performance Based Standards* (PBS)
- Ensuring a safer and more comfortable travel experience for all road users, via rest areas throughout the state, improved directional and information signage, and a road network with improved immunity to road closures caused by floods or other events
- Building intelligent transport systems as a way to tackle congestion

Issues canvassed in Questions on Notice and at the hearing included:

- Projects to tackle urban traffic congestion
- The Gateway upgrade project, the Ipswich Motorway upgrade, the construction of new interchanges on the Pacific Motorway, the Ipswich-Logan Motorway interchange, upgrades to the Logan and Pacific motorways, completion of the Sunshine Motorway upgrade, duplication and extension of the Centenary Highway and the duplication of the Houghton Highway
- Regional projects such as Mackay's Forgan Bridge duplication, the North Ward Road in Townsville and the Bundaberg Ring Road
- Major infrastructure projects for 2008-09 including rail extensions, bridge constructions, motorway upgrades, construction of interchanges and ring roads, and highway widening and realignment
- Synchronisation of Department of Main Roads controlled traffic signals with Brisbane City Council's traffic signals throughout Brisbane to improve traffic flow and reduce trip times
- Replacement of old traffic lights with energy efficient, low maintenance, light-emitting diodes for greater reliability and longer life
- The rent paid for a Department of Main Roads owned property at Carbrook
- Subsidence concerns related to the alignment of upgrades to the Ipswich Motorway
- Road asset valuation methodology
- Road maintenance and rehabilitation
- Federally funded roads in Queensland and the National Highway system
- Historical underfunding of the AusLink national network in Queensland and the resultant maintenance backlog
- Maintenance and preservation of the state controlled road network
- Maintenance of the local government road network
- Resealing and resurfacing work on roads and surfaces exceeding the optimal seal age
- The Department of Main Roads capital budget and motor vehicle registration revenue
- Anti-congestion measures
- Traffic congestion in South-East Queensland
- Traffic management, incident management and the provision of traveller information
- Traffic recovery units
- The joint Brisbane Metropolitan Transport Management Centre
- Single system traffic light control for improved traffic flow, reduced travel times and environmental benefits such as fewer emissions from idling vehicles
- The Gateway deviation
- The *Brisbane Airport Roundabout Task Force*
- The airport link northern busway extension and four-lane flyover
- The benefits of free-flow tolling
- The *Regional Bridge Renewal Program* to replace timber bridges and older concrete and steel structures in poor condition, and to rehabilitate selected other bridges, to ensure better approaches, alignment and flood immunity
- Development of pedestrian walkways and dedicated bikeways
- The *Accelerated Road Rehabilitation Program*
- Works in the Bowen Basin coalfields
- Truck driver safety on major freight routes
- National anti-fatigue laws
- Driver anti-fatigue management measures – rest areas, heavy vehicle rest areas, audio tactile line marking, and signage
- Installation of guardrails and extra warning signage, improved drainage, removal of hazards and provision of more overtaking opportunities on some popular routes
- Electronic variable message signs and cameras displaying automated warning messages
- Paving and sealing, road widening and realigning, T intersection reshaping, road resurfacing and lights installation at key sites
- The shortage of heavy vehicle rest areas
- Type 2 road train access west of Roma

- Impact of the Tugun bypass on traffic congestion and travel times
- Abolition of the Goodna bypass proposal
- The Ipswich-Logan Interchange project
- Measures to improve travel time to the Brisbane CBD
- The channelling of revenue from red light and speed camera fines to the *Safer Roads Sooner* program
- The greenhouse gas carbon emissions produced by RoadTek
- The RACQ's *Unroadworthy Roads* Survey
- Upgrades to the Bruce Highway between Cooroy and Curra

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The following table sets out the proposed appropriation for the Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation in 2008-09 compared to the previous financial year.

Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation	Budget 2007-08 \$'000	Budget 2008-09 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>		
Departmental Outputs	606,681	600,058
Equity Adjustment	(1,537)	4,271
<i>Administered Items</i>	328,764	393,656
Vote	933,908	997,985

During 2008-09, the department of local government will administer up to \$812 million in funding to local governments through the department's grants and subsidies programs.

Key initiatives and investments for the portfolio of local government for 2008-09 include³:

- A focus on supporting local governments financially and with advice and services as they progress under the new local

- government system, including a review of the legislative framework
- Implementing an integrated state-wide regional service delivery and funding model, including establishing new regional offices
- Developing a new local government performance evaluation and reporting model, to improve the sustainability of councils, and establish clear asset planning, funding and reporting processes, including nationally agreed frameworks
- Developing a suite of 'best practice' processes to build the capacity of local governments and to assist them to meet their statutory requirements and improve their overall performance. These processes will be particularly designed to meet the specialist needs of rural, remote and Indigenous councils
- Strengthening local government transparency and accountability by requiring local governments to provide community reports to keep their communities informed about the performance of councils, including financial matters, community involvement, councillor performance and complaints management
- Establishing a 'skills bank' of skilled personnel who can train, mentor and develop the skills of Indigenous councillors and administrative staff
- Providing \$1.3 million, through the *Community Governance Improvement Strategy*, to assist Indigenous councils to improve governance and service delivery via accredited training, community engagement and business systems improvement
- Providing a replacement package of \$14.1 million over four years to Indigenous councils as part of the Government's alcohol reform initiatives
- Securing long-term water supplies for Queensland communities remains a key priority for the department, including via incentive funding of \$5 million to encourage businesses outside SEQ with high levels of reticulated water consumption to implement water efficient devices and infrastructure, and by providing a 100 % capital subsidy of \$25.5 million over 5 years to enable local government water service providers to introduce fluoride through water treatment plants in communities outside South East Queensland with more than 1000 people

³ 2008-09 Queensland State Budget - Service Delivery Statements - Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation, 2-187.

- The Office of Rural and Regional Communities will manage the 170 *Blueprint for the Bush* initiatives across Government, including an annual Ministerial Community Forum and reporting on the implementation of the Blueprint
- Progressing the *Strengthening Rural Communities* funding program, including \$3.7 million for *Our Place, Our Future*, for rural and remote communities, \$1 million for the *Rural Service Access* funding program to establish community transport schemes, improve access to local services and enhance communities' social and economic cohesion; and \$0.2 million for the *Revitalising Rural Image* program, to assist communities to develop networks and promote rural lifestyles and opportunities, to attract skilled workers and investment
- Leading established whole-of-government community engagement forums including the Regional Managers' Coordination Networks and the Ministerial Regional Community Forums in Southeast Queensland and rural and regional communities across the State

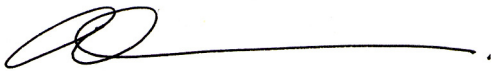
Issues canvassed in Questions on Notice and at the hearing included:

- The financial health of councils post-amalgamation
- The 2008 local government elections
- The Queensland Electoral Commission's costs to run the elections
- The Orion Report into the Cassowary Coast Council
- The cost of, and financial assistance for, the amalgamation process
- Ongoing costs of amalgamation and efficiency gains
- Non-unionised representation on enterprise bargaining negotiation teams
- Enterprise bargaining agreements
- Indigenous councils, a ban on liquor licensing, and profit replacement
- Regional service delivery
- Voting procedures at the March 2008 election
- A skills bank to maintain a pool of skilled staff available for Indigenous councils to meet their urgent operational needs, to

- undertake skills transfer to local staff, and to develop the capacity of the councils
- The Queensland Local Government Grants Commission
- The review of the *Local Government Act 1993*
- Performance standards for councils
- A proposed code of conduct for mayors and councillors
- Local councils' capacity to deal with local government planning issues
- Upgrades to sewage treatment plants
- Applications and approvals for the Infrastructure Grant Subsidy Program
- Departmental client satisfaction surveys
- The progress of Blueprint for the Bush
- The inaugural annual rural women symposium
- The Strengthening Rural Communities funding program to support grants for local projects in rural communities under the Rural Service Access initiative and under the Our Place, Our Future initiative
- The number of women in local government since the amalgamations and 2008 election
- Queensland's 150th Anniversary celebrations in 2009 and the Queensland's 150th Legacy Infrastructure Program
- The Local Government Remuneration Tribunal
- Funding for showgrounds via the Show Societies Grant to assist recognised show societies to conduct annual shows

RECOMMENDATION

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the *Appropriation Bill 2008* for the organisational units and portfolios allocated to it, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.



Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk, Chair
August 2008

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP (Chair)
Member for Inala

Mr Stuart Copeland MP (Deputy Chair)
Member for Cunningham

Mr Chris Bombolas MP,
Member for Chatsworth

Mr Phil Gray MP
Member for Gaven

Mr Howard Hobbs MP
Member for Warrego

Mrs Linda Lavarch MP
Member for Kurwongbah

Mr Peter Wellington MP
Member for Nicklin

SECRETARIAT

Ms Renée Easten (Research Director)
Ms Elaine Neill (Executive Assistant)

Estimates Committee C

2008

Statements of Reservation

Ms A Palaszczuk MP

Chair – Estimates Committee C

Parliament House

Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Ms Palaszczuk

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

This year has once again shown major deficiencies in the Estimates Committee process that have limited the effective scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. The following general reservations have been made by the Opposition over a period of time with regard to the Estimates Committee process:

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

- The overall Estimates process has failed to allow for any real analysis of the expenditures detailed in the Queensland Budget Statements.
- The limited time available to scrutinise each of the portfolios and agencies outlined in session timetables fails to ensure adequate analysis of each portfolios expenditure.
- Reservations are held with regards to the limited number of Questions on Notice allowed for each portfolio, which limit the ability to examine in depth all areas of the allocated budget items.
- The failure of Estimates Committees to allow direct questioning of Senior Public Service Administrators.
- 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 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 scrutinized by the Committee, the following reservations are made:

- In particular, the Minister failed to provide adequate answers to questions on important health and safety issues affecting our teachers, including asbestos levels in staff accommodation, and assaults that occurred against teachers.
- On the matter of asbestos, the Minister would not answer the work that had been done on the removal of asbestos from staff accommodation, despite the fact that the issue was raised extensively in the estimates process last year as well. The Estimates process over two years has gotten us no closer to receiving any information on this important issue, with nearly 2,300 buildings currently provided by EQ to accommodate teachers.
- The Opposition remains committed to full-time aides for Prep.

- The matter of the asbestos register was inadequately dealt with, with the best assurance from the Minister being a 'theoretical' promise of a better working system.
- Information on assaults on teachers was not forthcoming.
- Answers in response to full-time aides for prep year classes were also insufficient, with the Minister unable to provide any specifics on aide-time. This was despite the fact the number of children in prep classes over the recommended maximum has increased to at least 3,200.
- On the matter of arts funding, the Minister made inaccurate statements regarding the funding of Expressions dance company, describing the allocated funding as Rolling Annual funding, instead of the actual status of annual funding. This makes a significant difference to the operations of Arts companies, as annual funding does not allow them certainty in planning.
- Similarly, the Minister's response to funding cuts for the Queensland Arts Council that "I was concerned that a growing proportion of the funding provided to that organisation was being allocated to administrative costs. My focus is not on growing arts bureaucracies" was inaccurate and misleading. The Queensland Arts Council has reduced its administration costs over ten years from \$1,232,611 to \$395,543, a reduction from 22% to 7% of the business. At the same time, the number of staff in this organisation reduced from 39 to 27, while still maintaining an impressive schedule of delivering live performance.
- In his response to questioning on funding cuts to the Queensland Arts Law Centre, the Minister replied that the Centre "is also receiving funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General as one of a range of legal services that that department funds. I think that is entirely appropriate. It will continue to operate; it has not ceased to operate." The Minister would be aware that the funding from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General was made available after and because the Arts funding was cut. His response is consequently also misleading in this instance.
- A number of the remarks made by the Minister concerning local arts companies during his answer to a question on \$2m funding were inappropriate and potentially damaging to the companies involved. It is regretful that a Minister responsible for the promotion and development of Arts in our State chose to speak about some of our most successful companies in that manner.
- The Opposition remains concerned about the shortage of TAFE staff. The Minister's answers to the questioning on this topic did not allay our concerns.

Yours sincerely



Stuart Copeland MP

Member for Cunningham

Shadow Minister for Education, Training and the Arts

Annastacia Palaszczuk, MP

Chair – Estimates Committee C

Parliament House

Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Ms Palaszczuk,

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

This year has once again shown major deficiencies in the Estimates Committee process that have limited the effective scrutiny of the expenditures of Government Departments and agencies. The following general reservations are held with regards to the Estimates Committee process:

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

- The overall Estimates process has failed to allow for any real analysis of the expenditures detailed in the Queensland Budget Statements.
- The limited time available to scrutinise each of the portfolios and agencies outlined in session timetables fails to ensure adequate analysis of each portfolios expenditure.
- Reservations are held with regards to the limited number of Questions on Notice allowed for each portfolio, which limit the ability to examine in depth all areas of the allocated budget items.
- The failure of Estimates Committees to allow direct questioning of Senior Public Service Administrators.
- Receiving responses to Questions on Notice less than 24 hours prior to the actual commencement of Committee hearings greatly inhibits the capacity to further research the completeness and accuracy of answers provided.
- In addition to limited time provided for questions, the avoidance tactics of Ministers who reply to questions in such a way as to evade the issue being scrutinised throughout the hearings. Despite follow up questions, Ministers either avoided answering questions or simply read prepared briefing notes on subjects not related to the issues raised in the questions.
- 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.

In addition to these general comments about the Estimates Committee process the hearings of Estimates Committee C on Thursday 17th July 2008 also highlighted the following matters on which the response of the Minister was unsatisfactory.

- The Minister and his Department's inability to provide the figures for the three financial years from 2006/07 to 2008/09 for the non discretionary road budgets.
- The Minister's failure to produce to the Committee an answer on the level of carbon emissions produced by the road construction section of his Department Road Tek yet he was able to talk of the increased energy efficiency achieved by the replacement of 1 400 sets of traffic signals where old lights will be replaced with energy efficient Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs).

- The Minister's refusal to answer how many discussions with the union movement in relation to enterprise bargaining in comparison to how many times he had met with the LGAQ on the same issue and the Minister's denial of his involvement when clearly his department was a signatory to letters on the negotiation process for new enterprise bargaining agreements.
- The inability of the Minister to understand or comprehend the level of extraordinary costs to ratepayers and councils of the flawed amalgamation model forced on Local Government.
- The inability of the Minister and the Department to provide the total costs to Councils of the forced Local Government amalgamations process either through a Question on Notice process or at the Hearing.
- The Minister's belittling of Local Government estimates about the costs associated with the forced amalgamation process and his labeling of their requests for assistance as "Nigerian loan scams".
- The Minister was evasive when questioned on the Orion Report as he and the Department have had numerous inquires and correspondence on the content, and requested release of this report.
- The State Government claims that amalgamations will achieve stronger councils, it is unlikely that extraordinary costs are associated with forced amalgamations of councils and that local government rates would not rise significantly because of amalgamations, are clearly refuted by the Orion Report.

Yours faithfully



Howard Hobbs MP

Member for Warrego

Shadow Minister for Main Roads and Local Government.