



Speech by

Mr N. ROBERTS

MEMBER FOR NUDGE

Hansard 28 October 1999

**APPROPRIATION BILL
Estimates Committee F
Report**

Mr ROBERTS (Nudgee—ALP) (12.47 p.m.): I place on record my thanks to all committee members for their input into the Estimates process and also to committee staff for their professional advice and assistance throughout the inquiry process. I particularly mention research director Meg Hoban, research officer Sarah Lim and executive assistant Sandy Musch. Also, I thank both Ministers for their contributions and the extraordinary amount of work that is obviously carried out by departmental officers during the inquiry process.

I will mention briefly some of the key initiatives in both portfolios. Firstly, in relation to employment initiatives, one of the impressive achievements is in the apprenticeships and traineeships sector. Of course, that reverses the sad decline that occurred under the coalition Government. The target number of subsidies to employ apprentices in the private sector in the 1998-99 year was 2,500, but the result was an impressive 4,117. Similar results were also achieved in the provision of subsidies to employ trainees in the private sector. The target this year was 2,000; the result was 2,449. Apprenticeship targets in the public sector and the Housing Industry Trade Training program are also on track to achieve better than targeted results next year. The number of employment opportunities created through assistance to the long-term unemployed is also encouraging: 1,450 was the target, but 3,774 people were assisted by Government programs. By any measure these are impressive results and the Minister and his department should be congratulated on their efforts.

With respect to education, I want to focus on one issue relating to the budget allocation of \$1.3m out of a \$6m contribution the Government will make towards the relocation of the Australian Catholic University to Banyo. In my view, this provides enormous opportunities for north Brisbane as well as opportunities to implement some innovative educational systems within public education. The concept I am trying to promote at this site is one of a seamless transition between primary school, secondary school and university education. I think those within the system would agree that there are sometimes artificial barriers between those levels.

One of the key strategic issues for Education Queensland is to actively promote public education and to reverse the decline in the Year 12 apparent retention rate and in the enrolment share of State schools. In my view, one way of addressing this is to introduce innovative processes and initiatives which will enhance the learning outcomes available in our State school system.

The siting of the university at Banyo presents a unique opportunity to implement some of these innovative systems that will benefit both students and staff alike. The proposal I am talking about involves the development of formal links between the Nudgee State School, the Banyo high school and the Banyo university. As I have stated, it involves the concept of a seamless transition for those students who need it between primary, secondary and university education.

As an example, a gifted and talented Year 7 student could tap into appropriate subjects at the Banyo high school. Gifted and talented Year 12 students could be enrolled in appropriate university subjects as a part of their studies. Similarly, high school students that needed remedial teaching or schooling could access teachers from the primary school to enhance their chances of progressing

through the education system. Such cross-fertilisation of students would not only enhance their educational prospects but also provide unique professional development opportunities for teachers, who could also move between the schooling levels according to need.

Mr Wells: These are good ideas.

Mr ROBERTS: I thank the Minister. I do intend to put forward a formal proposal for discussions at least on this matter in the very near future. I believe that the Banyo site, with the siting of a primary school, a secondary school and a university all within walking distance of each other—in fact, just across the road from each other—presents us with a unique opportunity to explore the possibilities.

In the Estimates Committee F report some procedural matters were raised in relation to questions on notice and also the definition of Government owned corporations. I thank the Ministers for their cooperation in relation to the issues and questions that were put before them in the Estimates process. The Ministers quite rightly exercised their discretion in terms of refusing to answer some questions. However, the committee believed that, in the end, there probably should be only two restrictions on questions on notice put before Ministers: first, that they relate to one subject or one issue only and, second, that the Minister retain the right to not answer a question the answering of which would be unduly onerous.
