



Speech by

STEVEN RODGERS

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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APPROPRIATION BILLS [ESTIMATES COMMITTEE F]

Mr RODGERS (Burdekin—ALP) (3.22 p.m.): I rise to speak as a member of Estimates Committee F appointed to examine and report on the proposed expenditure to the organisational units within the portfolios of the Minister for Employment, Training and Youth and Minister for the Arts, the Minister for Education and the Minister for Industrial Relations. As a newly elected member of the parliament I thank the committee chair, Karen Struthers, and its deputy chair, the Honourable Vince Lester, my parliamentary colleagues and secretariat staff Ms Sarah Lim, the research director, and Andrea Musch, the executive assistant of the estimates committee for their help with regard to information on the operation and process of the committee.

It was pleasing to hear that the appropriation for the Department of Employment, Training and Youth is \$588,578,000. This is an area of interest to me. Some \$10 million has been allocated in 2001-02 and 2002-03 for Youth for the Environment and Local Communities Program, a program which gives 15 to 24 year olds nationally accredited qualifications through work in their local communities, mainly in the areas of environment protection, horticulture and waste management. Some \$5.4 million was allocated over three years for the Experience Pays Program to boost job opportunities for long-term mature-age job seekers. These programs are all necessary.

As education is an area I have a strong interest in, it was good to see that the total appropriation for the Department of Education for 2001-02 is \$4,271,908,000. This is certainly welcome considering the lack of funding from the federal coalition government for education. There are many highlights in this package for me. One such highlight is the \$15 million per year for funding for teachers and teachers aides for students with disabilities. The increase in teacher salaries by 4.5 per cent from 10 April 2002 is a much-deserved increase for teachers. There is also \$54 million for the continuation of the Secondary Schools Renewal Program. All of these programs are well worth while and deserve the funding they have been allocated. I once again take this opportunity to publicly thank the Education Minister, Anna Bligh, for her intervention regarding an issue of concern in the Burdekin electorate surrounding the Ooononba State School and for getting it back on track. Once again, thank you on behalf of the school community.

I turn now to industrial relations, an area in which I have an interest as a former boiler maker, a member of the Metal Workers Union and a union representative at the Kalamia sugar mill in the electorate of Burdekin, which I now represent. The total appropriation for the department is \$58,059,000, of which there is an additional allocation of \$4 million for enhanced workplace health and safety, an issue which is always of concern in the work force. It is certainly welcome. There is also funding for the development of and support for employment policies that enable workers to achieve a better balance between work and family responsibilities and that create a more family-friendly work environment. The workers compensation changes were also welcome changes for the better.

I thank all the ministers and their staff for the professional way in which they responded to the questions put to them by the committee and for the way they supplied the required information requested by the committee. I fully support the expenditure stated in Appropriation Bill 2001 for the original units within the portfolios referred to in Estimates Committee F.