



Speech by

Peter Wellington

MEMBER FOR NICKLIN

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Mr WELLINGTON (Nicklin—Ind) (5.19 pm): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to participate in the debate on the estimates committee report. I would like to congratulate the chairman, the member for Inala, for the way she chaired the committee. I congratulate the ministers for their presentations and their answers to the questions. I also thank the other members from the government and the opposition for their willingness to allow us all to work together in the estimates committee hearing process.

I congratulate the minister for education for having TAFE and education under the one ministry; quite frankly, I believe this is long overdue. I remember standing in this chamber and calling for TAFE and education to be combined because they both focused on training and improving the education of Queensland students. So I think that is great.

In Nambour, we have the Nambour TAFE facility right beside Burnside State High School, Burnside Primary School and Nambour Special School. What better opportunity is there on the Sunshine Coast and in Nambour to showcase how a real partnership can happen. In response to my question on that very issue of school based partnerships, the minister was able to give a very detailed answer on how Burnside State High School and Nambour State High School are working so closely with the Nambour TAFE.

I thank the minister for his support of our school based traineeships on the Sunshine Coast. It is great to see the continuation of funding for the upgrading and expansion of Nambour TAFE because I think we will see Nambour continue to play an ongoing and important role in the future of the Sunshine Coast. I believe Nambour will be the host of the future council chambers of the Greater Sunshine Coast Regional Council. We already have the Maroochy council chambers there, so it is great to see the continued focus on Nambour.

It was also great to see that the minister for education responded to one of my questions by announcing that Education Queensland had decided to purchase 2.16 hectares of significant land right in the heart of Nambour—right in that education precinct beside Nambour Special School, Burnside Primary School, Burnside State High School and Nambour TAFE—so we could expand our Nambour Special School. On behalf of my constituents, I thank the minister for his commitment to special school students on the Sunshine Coast.

It was also great to see that we have this school community partnership happening. Another member has spoken about the focus on physical education for our students. I am really pleased to see that at long last we have a state government that wants to encourage the community to use our education department facilities. I can remember a few years ago when we could not get anyone to talk about funding joint facilities. Councils would not do it, the community could not do it and the education department said, 'No.' But today we see a new vision and a new focus, and it is about a community working together to ensure the maximum and best use of our facilities. I think it is a wonderful opportunity for many of our school facilities to be expanded. More importantly, it is great to see the lights on in our school campuses after the children have gone home and to see other school activities and community activities being undertaken outside of the normal school hours.

We have also seen the removal of asbestos roofs in many of the older schools in my electorate, because Nambour is one of the older areas of Queensland and we have many old traditional schools. We have Nambour State High School, which certainly has a tradition, and we have seen many of those asbestos roofs being replaced and that is great news. Although we have been complaining about the extended dry weather, it has certainly given the department a chance to get on with the job of removing our roofs, and that is certainly a win for our communities.

We also saw an opportunity for many senior departmental staff to focus on some of the issues that members of the committee raised. I think that is good because sometimes we expect the minister to know it all, but we have many senior department staff right across the government areas who are paid handsomely to do a lot of work. Quite frankly, ministers rely very heavily on those senior departmental staff to give them the information they require, so it was great to see some of our senior departmental staff had to do a lot of work. I certainly know that a few spent quite some time preparing answers for the ministers, and I congratulate the ministers for their answers. It was a pleasure to be involved in this year's estimates committee hearing. We were able to examine matters involving education, local government, planning and sport.