



Speech by

Ros Bates

MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE G

Ms BATES (Mudgeeraba—LNP) (3.17 pm): I rise today to make a contribution to Estimates Committee G and the Education and Training portfolio. The Premier has stood in this parliament time and time again saying that Queensland is the Smart State. Yet ask a parent of a child attending a state school in Mudgeeraba and I am sure that they are not likely to agree with the Premier. Queensland has some of the poorest literacy and numeracy standards in the nation. That is a fact and one that cannot be ignored. Not only are our children's education standards low; school capacities across the state are not keeping pace with our population growth and some of our teachers are amongst the lowest paid in the country. We have teachers with class numbers well above the target of 25 students. These educators of our future generations are using their own money for basic school supplies because schools are not adequately funded and therefore can only supply limited resources to their teachers.

Is it really any wonder that teacher morale is at an all-time low in Queensland? Could one blame a teacher for moving to another state for better conditions? The enrolment figures released earlier this year show that across the state nearly 50,000 students attend state schools that are at 100 per cent capacity. There are also more than 21,000 students attending schools at 98 to 99 per cent capacity, and some of these are actually in my electorate. Our children—Queensland's future—are facing 11 years of neglect and poor planning by this Queensland Labor government. These are not the actions of a government focused on turning Queensland into a smart state.

I have eight feeder primary schools and only one state high school, which only became part of my electorate as a result of the last redistribution. The one and only high school, Robina State High School, is already operating at 80 per cent capacity and can only accept approximately 400 more enrolments before it reaches full capacity. Madam Deputy Speaker, you do the maths—eight primary schools, which is approximately 4,330 students, and only one high school. I ask: which high school are these children expected to attend?

For the past two years I have continually lobbied for a new high school west of the M1, yet the former member and the Bligh government came out during the election campaign and said that there was no need for a new state high school west of the M1 for another 20 years—20 years. Sixty-eight per cent of the Mudgeeraba electorate are under 45 years of age with school-age children and, with a growth rate of 3.7 per cent per annum, how can this Labor government ignore the needs of my community? Easily it seems. Labor is more interested in trying to shift blame and deflect attention away from the corruption within its own government than actually governing in the best interests of Queenslanders.

I recently started a petition calling for the state Labor government to commit to a feasibility study for a new high school west of the M1 and to provide the documentation which justifies that planning new facilities in a growth corridor such as Mudgeeraba is not required for 20 years. In a very short space of time I have collected approximately 250 signatures. Every week I am receiving page after page of this petition completely filled out. I have even had local grandparents coming in to my office to sign this petition. Even they can recognise the need for another high school for our growing area. Recently I visited some local kindergartens, and whilst there I was approached by parents who were wanting to send their children to a

local high school. Their children are only in kindergarten but even they can see how the lack of a high school will affect the area in years to come.

Recent figures obtained from a question on notice to the Minister for Education clearly show that over 35 per cent of children attending Robina State High School, which is east of the M1, in actual fact live west of the M1 in Mudgeeraba. Parents of children currently attending high schools have also signed the petition and indicated that they would transfer their children as soon as it was built. They do not want to have to cross the M1—also known as the Mudgeeraba car park—on a daily basis to take their children to and from school. This government needs to pull its head out of the sand and look at growth rates now, not wait until it gets its maths right and finally comes to the same conclusion—that our schools are overcrowded—and then propose a bandaid solution.

I also note the concern of parents in Springbrook who, due to the buy-up of over \$40 million of land to extend the heritage listed areas of Springbrook, are left with advice from the minister that locals are now meant to host sporting fixtures on the school grounds at Springbrook State School instead of where they should be, which is at the settlement—an area that was bequested to the community and was ripped from this community in a backflip from the former member and placed in the hands of the EPA. I note that the Minister for Environment continues to peddle the line that the members of the LNP are environmental terrorists and that we do not support this land purchase. Let me make it clear that no-one in Springbrook is against preserving this area, but what they are against is having their school oval used for community purposes when they had the area available to them previously.

(Time expired)