




Speech by

Hon. Cameron Dick

MEMBER FOR GREENSLOPES

Hansard Friday, 17 June 2011

**APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL;
COMMUNITY AMBULANCE COVER LEVY REPEAL AND REVENUE
AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Hon. CR DICK** (Greenslopes—ALP) (Minister for Education and Industrial Relations) (7.58 pm): I am delighted to rise this evening to speak in support of the appropriation bills for 2011-12. As the state member for Greenslopes and Queensland's Minister for Education and Industrial Relations, I am delighted to inform the House that once again the Bligh Labor government has demonstrated its commitment to education in the 2011-12 state budget. This is clear not only in the education projects funded for communities throughout Queensland but also in the projects that have been funded in the electorate of Greenslopes, which I am privileged to represent in this House. Initially, I will touch on some of the highlights from the budget pertaining to the Education and Training portfolio, and then I will briefly address some of the more significant initiatives for the Greenslopes electorate.

First to education and training: in 2011-12, the Bligh government will invest a massive \$10.342 billion in this area, representing an increase of \$443 million, or 4.5 per cent, on estimated expenditure for 2010-11. In relation to the education portfolio, the news is even better—a record operational budget of almost \$7.4 billion has been allocated in the 2011-12 state budget. This funding allows the Bligh government to continue its progressive education reform agenda and give all young Queenslanders a flying start to learning and life.

This investment will deliver new and renewed schools, more teachers and teacher aides, and continued support for students with special needs. Queensland already has a first-class education system and this record funding—which represents an increase to the operational budget for education of almost nine per cent—will help us to improve it even more. It allows the government to continue the substantial reform agenda that began a decade ago as Labor strove to lift the standard of education in this great state.

It is worthwhile reminding members about some of the highlights of that reform agenda. We introduced groundbreaking learning-or-earning laws, enabling all Queensland students to develop a pathway to further study, vocational training or employment; we added an extra year of schooling with the introduction of prep; and we have taken giant steps towards giving all children in the state access to a quality kindergarten service. We have shaken off the old ways, when education was not valued, and set aspirational targets for our schools and students. We are sending a clear message to principals, teachers and parents that we believe we can do better.

We are already starting to see positive results from our reforms. Since 2008, Queensland students have improved in 19 of the 20 NAPLAN test result areas using the average scores. Overall, Queensland's results have shown significant gains in more test result areas than any other state or territory since the NAPLAN tests began. We have also set targets for Indigenous performance improvement and we are seeing the benefits of our investments in this area. Since 2008, Indigenous Queensland students have improved in 18 of the 20 NAPLAN test result areas using the average scores. We still have some way to go to get to where we want to be but the strong signs of improvement are evident across our results.

We are investing in 91 literacy and numeracy coaches, 72 summer schools and professional development of teachers in English and mathematics, and we are funding between 10 and 20 hours of intensive teaching for students in years 3 and 5 struggling to meet the national standards in literacy and/or numeracy—to name just a few of our strategies. These are part of our plan to get to the top of the class nationally, and the education results being achieved in Queensland are promising in a range of areas.

For example, a record 93 per cent of year 12 graduates received a qualification in 2010, which represents a five per cent increase on our 2009 results. More than 81 per cent of graduates achieved a Queensland Certificate of Education in 2010—up nine per cent on the previous year. And 26,789 students were awarded a vocational education and training qualification—an increase of eight per cent and almost 60 per cent of the year 12 cohort.

In fact, our school based apprenticeship and traineeship results are nothing short of outstanding. Queensland, which accounts for well over half the nation's school based apprenticeships and traineeships, recorded growth of 14 per cent in this area in 2010—another indication of the options available to our senior secondary students.

But the finish line is never reached when it comes to education and we are always looking for further ways to improve our performance. That is why we have decided that year 7 should join high school in 2015. This decision was made as part of the government's response to the *A flying start for Queensland children* discussion paper, and we released our response last week. The white paper outlines the important reasons why transferring year 7 to high school will be beneficial to our children.

Firstly, by 2015, more than half of all year 7 students will be turning 13, and it is widely recognised that 13-year-olds should be studying at high school. Secondly, with the introduction of prep in 2007, year 7 will be the eighth year of formal schooling. The eighth year of schooling has traditionally been the start of high school in Queensland for many years, and this will again be the case from 2015. Thirdly, we raised the starting age for school in 2008, meaning children will be older when they reach year 7 in 2015. Educators agree that adolescents at this age are ready for greater independence and the depth of learning that high schools provide, which is why, in most other states and territories, year 7 is already the first year of high school.

Finally, the introduction of the new Australian curriculum will mean greater consistency across the country in terms of what children of certain ages are studying. We want Queensland's children to be on a level playing field with other states such as New South Wales and Victoria and they have had year 7 in high school for many years.

Our decision to transfer year 7 into high school has received widespread support with endorsement from key stakeholders such as the Queensland Teachers Union, the Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Queensland, primary and secondary principals associations, and education academics. Before making the decision, the government consulted widely, holding 93 forums across Queensland and calling for submissions from interested parties and individuals. Through this consultation process, people told us that there were benefits in moving year 7 to secondary school, although they raised some concerns about some sections of the proposal. In particular, they asked about: the emotional maturity and readiness of students, the impact the move could have in rural and remote areas, and the financial, infrastructure and human and physical resource implications.

The consultation showed that forums and group submissions were more supportive of moving year 7 than submissions from individuals. When asked 'Should year 7 be in secondary school when it is the eighth year of formal schooling?' 84 per cent of forum respondents said yes. Group submissions recorded a 72 per cent yes vote, while 44 per cent of individual respondents were in the affirmative. This feedback was vital in shaping our decision, which includes a substantial funding package for new and refurbished classrooms and learning areas, teacher training and support, pastoral care measures for students, and extra assistance for rural and remote families.

More than \$328 million has been allocated over four years for building works at state schools. We have also allocated \$293 million for things such as teacher training and support. This includes capital grants assistance of more than \$81 million to help the non-state sector make the change. In total, the government has allocated \$622 million of new money over the forward estimates—a significant allocation by anyone's measure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I seek leave to incorporate the rest of my speech into *Hansard*. I have the approval of the Speaker to do so.

Leave granted.

While funding for the Year 7 move formed the centrepiece of the Education budget, there were several other substantial funding allocations.

For example, the State Budget outlined our continued commitment to provide up to 240 kindergarten services by 2014, so that every Queensland child has access to kindy.

We will ensure 85 new kindergarten services are operational by the end of 2012, including fast-tracking 40 services originally scheduled for 2013 and 2014. To do this, we have allocated \$75 million in this year's budget.

We will also employ up to 300 extra full-time equivalent teachers and teacher aides in state schools to meet enrolment growth and support students with special needs.

This means the Queensland Government has created more than 10,000 new teacher and teacher aide positions in state schools since 1998—staggering figure.

We will create an extra 5000 teacher aide hours each week by investing \$24.5 million to complete our \$43 million, three-year commitment for an additional 15,000 teacher hours weekly to support Prep to Year 7 students.

I am particularly pleased that we have been able to increase the maintenance budget for existing schools in this year's budget, with a \$50 million injection of new money into the new State School Investment Program, bringing the total expenditure for the financial year to \$134 million.

This means that we can fast-track maintenance at schools across the state and complete more projects sooner.

The State Government will also spend more than \$487 million on infrastructure in schools and kindergartens.

Our infrastructure investment for 2011-12 includes \$132.8 million for:

new schools at Mango Hill, Murrumba Downs and the Sunshine Coast

the relocation of Tagai State College's Mer campus

staged work at Redlynch State College, Coomera Springs State School, Meridan State College and Bounty Boulevard State School

and new land and more classrooms in growth areas.

Mr Speaker—Labor governments, more than any other, recognise the life-changing potential of education.

Education has had an enormous impact on my life, and it has the potential to have the same positive effects on everyone who wants to be the best they can be.

This government is committed to investing in education—it's an investment in our future and the future of Queensland.

Greenslopes

Education is a key focus area for this year's budget—right across the state and particularly in the Greenslopes electorate.

The State Budget includes numerous funding measures that specifically benefit the Greenslopes electorate.

Among the big winners in the budget are several schools such as Holland Park State High School, which will receive \$150,000 to upgrade its quadrangle including seating and shade sails for students, and Seville Road State School's Prep area, which gets \$50,000 for a new playground.

I am also pleased that \$50,000 has been allocated to develop a master plan for infrastructure at Cavendish Road State High School, while Marshall Road State School will get \$95,000 for a new filtration system for its swimming pool.

Mt Gravatt State School will also get \$50,000 for a shade cover for its new play area.

On top of this, a total of \$872,000 will be spent on maintaining schools in the Greenslopes electorate, as part of the State Schools Investment Program.

Kindergarten services in Greenslopes also get a massive boost in the 2011-12 State Budget, with \$155,000 being allocated to get our kids ready for their Prep year.

This includes:

\$52,000 for Holland Park Child Care Centre

\$31,000 for Peter Pan Wholistic Early Childhood Centre in Coorparoo

\$30,000 for Greenslopes Child Care Centre

\$19,000 for Adeona Early Exploration Centre in Coorparoo

and \$19,000 for Mount Gravatt West C&K.

Funding of \$66.26 million has been allocated in the Budget to complete the \$465 million second stage of the Eastern Busway from Buranda to Main Avenue, Coorparoo, which will relieve congestion for many residents in the Greenslopes electorate.

This is part of the Labor-led revolution in public transport across Brisbane's southside which is helping to cut commuting times, reduce congestion, bring down petrol bills and help reduce our carbon footprint.

There is also \$7.3 million for disability services and support for carers, with funding going to local organisations such as Vision Australia, Carers Queensland and ARAFMI Queensland, and \$6.35 million to build new community housing accommodation units.

Mr Speaker—the Bligh Government understands the pressures on household budgets and the cost of living.

That is why the State Budget includes several measures to put money back into the pockets of Greenslopes residents.

As an example of this:

the \$113-a-year ambulance levy is being abolished from the 1st of July 2011;

the Pensioners Rates Rebate will jump 11 per cent to a maximum of \$200 a year;

pensioners will have their electricity subsidy increased by up to \$14, to a maximum payment of \$230 a year; and

the water subsidy for pensioners will be increased by \$20 to \$120 a year.

The State Budget also includes the Queensland Building Boost, which is designed to help make housing more affordable and to stimulate the construction sector.

Under this \$140 million program, anyone who buys a new house or signs up to build one from the 1st of August 2011 will receive a \$10,000 grant.

This boost, which is available for six months, is for properties valued up to \$600,000.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, the 2011-12 State Budget lays the foundation for the continued prosperity of this great state—particularly in relation to education.

Our record operational budget for education, coupled with our ongoing reforms and improvements, mean that our education system will be well equipped to meet the needs of our students and our state in the 21st century.

It is a budget that delivers for Queensland students, delivers for Queensland schools, and delivers for the Greenslopes electorate.

It will help us to continue our reputation as a great state in which to live, learn and work.

I commend the Bills to the House.