




Speech by

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MEMBER FOR INALA

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL AND APPROPRIATION BILL: EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (9.11 pm): At the outset I thank the chair and members of the committee for participating in this Education and Innovation Committee's estimates hearing. I will be restricting my comments to the education component of the committee's deliberations. The minister, when asked in the abstract about the laudable goal contained in the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 to provide universal access to high-quality state education, gave all the right answers. He waxed lyrical about the provision of high-quality education across regional Queensland. However, given the specifics of the children enrolled in the travelling show school, the matter was entirely different. He was not so concerned about those children's right to the high-quality education they have been receiving. The minister actually gave poor attendance records and their poor NAPLAN results as a reason for closing the school. Yet in the reading category for the year 3 cohort the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children received a higher score than nine other Queensland schools. I hope the minister is not threatening to close those schools also because of poor NAPLAN results.

No-one would doubt that the circumstances of the children attending the travelling show school are unusual to say the least. I would have thought that a better option would be to provide the additional support that was necessary to bring those results up to par with the rest of the state. The minister admitted that he had held meetings with representatives of the school, but what he failed to deny when asked was the allegation made by those present at the meeting that his chief of staff said in a meeting with those representatives, 'Why should we keep you open when you have been slagging us off in the media?'

Another disturbing feature of the minister's answering of questions was his apparent lack of knowledge of the legislative requirements for closure of a school in Queensland. He seemed totally unaware that there is a legislative requirement for consultation to occur with the school community. He seemed totally oblivious to the fact that if the minister is proposing to close a school, the minister must publish a notice about the proposal in the Queensland Government Gazette. He also seemed totally unfamiliar with the requirement for the gazettal notice to be published at least six months prior to any school closure, as did his director-general. But given some time and the advice of his department the minister was able to come back to the committee later to advise that even though the school closure would not be gazetted six months before the school closed at the end of the school year this year, the school will cease operations at the end of this year, but the official closure will take effect from a date at least six months after publication of the notice in the gazette. That is certainly some sleight of hand on the part of the minister. I wonder who would be able to distinguish between a school closure and a cessation of operation of a school. I think they would look pretty much the same to me, but one would comply with the legislation and the other would not.

On a more positive note, I was excited by the advice from the director-general that the kindy participation rate had reached 68 per cent last year with a goal of 65 per cent under the national partnership agreement. That is an amazing achievement when we consider that in 2009 the kindy participation rate in Queensland was only 29 per cent. I am pleased that both the minister and the director-

general acknowledge this achievement. The director-general described kindy as a wonderful story for Queensland and I would have to agree. This would certainly be one of the achievements of the previous Labor government of which we are most proud.

I want the minister to know that we put the groundwork in in building these new kindies, in approving long day-care centres to deliver a kindy program and to employ qualified kindy teachers. We will be looking to him to deliver the final targets under the national partnership agreement in the next couple of years.