



Speech by

Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard Tuesday, 13 November 2012

MOTION: EDUCATION, FUNDING



Ms PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (5.30 pm): I move—

That this House:

- recognises the importance of providing high-quality education to all Queensland children to establish a pattern of lifelong learning;
- calls on the Newman government to ensure adequate funding for both state and non-state education sectors; and
- calls on the Newman government to ensure resources are allocated to provide sufficient support to disadvantaged students, particularly those with a disability and/or learning impairment.

It is a sad indictment on the Newman government that we are in this chamber tonight debating the level of funding for education in Queensland. Education is the cornerstone of the future health and prosperity of Queenslanders. Education provides opportunity, regardless of background or circumstances, to lead a worthwhile and fulfilling life as well as contribute to society in a meaningful way. Labor recognises this undeniable truth. Unfortunately, the Newman government is yet to fully realise these simple facts.

Since coming to power on 24 March 2012 the Newman government has systematically and deliberately taken decisions and implemented policies that erode the foundations of our society. They have broken election commitments by sacking public servants, they have torn at the fabric of local communities by slashing funding to community organisations and they have placed the construction of a new building for the Premier and his ministers ahead of higher priorities, including the proper funding of key government services such as education.

During the election campaign the Premier talked extensively about a higher standard of accountability in this state—one which we are still yet to see. I remind the House that he said to the Townsville Chamber of Commerce that ministers will be accountable for their departments and decision making will be open and transparent and on 4KQ Breakfast he said that ministers will be accountable and if they do not perform they will get the sack et cetera. We still have the situation where the Premier has failed to come into this House today and reveal all ministers' lobbyists registers. We have seen Minister Ros Bates come in to correct the record. We still have not heard what Minister Bruce Flegg has to say in relation to his record. The Newman government's appalling record after just eight months in power stands in stark contrast to Labor's achievements over the past decade and more in relation to education.

Government members interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not want to hear it. It was Labor that in 2004 started implementing its plans.

Government members interjected.

Madam SPEAKER: Order!

Ms PALASZCZUK: They do not want to hear it, Madam Speaker.

Mr Langbroek: I want to hear it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes, because you are following part of the tradition. It was Labor that in 2004 started implementing its plans to introduce a universally available voluntary full-time prep year. This plan was fulfilled in 2007 and now about 97 per cent of eligible students attend this extra year of schooling. In 2006 Queensland led Australia in introducing legislative changes to ensure that our children were either earning or learning. These education and training reforms raised the school-leaving age to 16 and required young people to earn or learn for an extra year. Labor also made changes to the school starting age for year 1 pupils, making students on average six months older when they start school. That brought Queensland in line with other states and territories.

Mr Ruthenberg interjected.

Ms PALASZCZUK: They obviously do not want to hear it. What Queenslanders have been subjected to over the last few weeks has been this daily soap opera and what the opposition wants to do in this chamber tonight is get back to the real issues that are confronting Queenslanders—real issues that they want to hear about in their electorates such as education. That is what the people of Queensland want to hear about—not the daily soap opera which is the Newman government lurching from one crisis to another crisis, from one scandal to the next scandal! This is what Queenslanders want to hear. They want to hear the truth about education and the lasting legacy that the Labor government left.

A government member: You have a hide!

Madam SPEAKER: Order! There are too many interjections from the back of the chamber.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Other changes included the introduction of the new Queensland Senior Certificate in 2008. The new certificate recognises a broader range of learning achievements, including learning from schools, TAFE, private training providers, universities, workplaces and community organisations. The legislative framework for education has been overhauled. A major review of the Education (Teacher Registration) Act 1988 was instigated to maintain the quality of the teaching profession and recognised prior qualifications to bring more expert teachers into the classroom.

The Premier so often carries on about openness and transparency, but he fails to recognise that it was Labor in 2005 that introduced an unprecedented level of public accountability and transparency when it comes to school outcomes. This led Queensland to become the first state to centrally publish school-by-school results and OP outcomes. We have contributed data to the Australian government's MySchool website and we implemented the release of a suite of school based data such as suspensions, capacity figures and the results of teaching and learning audits. Labor's record extends to capital works. It was Labor that funded the landmark \$850 million State Schools of Tomorrow initiative—the largest capital works program in the history of education in Queensland. Labor opened the first two Queensland Academies in 2007, providing some of the state's brightest students with opportunities to excel in science, maths and the creative arts. A third academy for health science then opened in 2008.

In 2009 Labor announced our intentions to provide universal access to a qualified kindergarten program for every child in the state. As a result of this program, which will further help give Queensland children a strong educational foundation, we saw participation rates lifted to 68 per cent by the end of last year. More recently, it was the Labor state government that announced the intention to shift year 7 into high school from 2015, ensuring that Queensland children in their eighth year of schooling will have access to the resources and challenges for which they are ready. During the term of the previous Labor government, more than 11,500 new teachers and teacher aides were hired—not sacked, hired. A total of 74 new or refurbished schools were constructed across the state, particularly in the growth areas. The budget for school education rose from \$3.1 billion in 1998 to more than \$7 billion in 2011-12.

This long list of achievements stacks up well against the mean and cold-hearted Newman government. The LNP has not said too much about education, particularly school and early childhood education, since coming to power in March. However, its actions speak volumes for its attitude, and what a poor attitude it is! It is no wonder there is a huge split between the old Nationals and the old Liberals in the far from united LNP. Take for instance the actions this government has taken that make life harder—not easier—for those in rural and regional Queensland. A key part of regional economies are the annual agricultural shows. A key part of those shows for the past two decades has been the teachers who travel the circuit to help the schoolchildren of show families. In the past decade or so, the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children has operated through mobile classrooms, giving a greater sense of stability and certainty to the education offered to children of show families. It is astounding that any party with the word 'National' in its name would callously scrap the travelling show school. Before it was the 'LNP' it was the 'Nationals' and before that it was the 'Country Party'. Now those opposite could not care less about those in rural and regional areas or the industries. That is why the LNP education minister did not blink an eye at budget time when he announced he was closing the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children. Shame, Minister, shame! He did it without consultation, as he was supposed to do under the Education (General Provisions) Act. In fact, he did it in the most insulting and cold-hearted way. The education minister has caused a crisis amongst show families by slamming the door shut on their travelling show school.

Far from consulting, he simply told show families that their school was closing. Like it or lump it, their children will be accessing the school of distance education from the start of the 2013 school year. That is despite the fact that the families themselves say that distance education will not work for their children because of the nature of their work, the travelling involved and the early starts and late finishes associated with the show work. If the minister had consulted them, he might have known.

In closing, the Labor opposition in this House is raising issues that matter to Queenslanders. Education is the cornerstone of any government. We have heard hardly anything about education, because all we have had is the daily soap opera that is the Newman government. It is disgraceful. Queenslanders deserve better. They deserve better from this government. They do not deserve a soap opera; they deserve a credible government.

(Time expired)