



Speech by


# Stephen Bennett

MEMBER FOR BURNETT

Hansard Wednesday, 31 October 2012

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

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.15 pm): It is my pleasure, after my first estimates, to support the adoption of the report of the Education and Innovation Committee. It was a pleasure to participate as part of the committee. At the outset I express my gratitude for the cooperation of all of the members of the committee, including the chair Rosemary Menkens. I also express my thanks to the ministers who appeared before the committee, their respective directors-general and other officers, all of whom conducted themselves, in my view, with the appropriate dignity and transparency that was expected. I acknowledge the work done by Ms Bernice Watson, Ms Emily Booth and Ms Carolyn Heffernan, all research officers to parliament. The portfolios covered included those of the Department of Education, Training and Employment and the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. These are very important economic portfolios. These portfolios are vital to the economic wellbeing and growth of our state. They are also very important because they relate to the future economic, social and cultural wellbeing of our citizens, particularly in relation to education, skills and training.

The portfolios covered by this committee's responsibilities are broad and interesting, but also vital in terms of the interests of Queensland. Education is key to the government's belief in the attainment of social justice and its belief that every Queenslander has the right to fulfil their potential in life. The expenditure and commitments in the budget highlight the government's commitment to delivering for those young and impressionable in our community. One of the most important challenges we face in this term of parliament is the training of our young people. The figures that are coming out of Wide Bay Burnett and across Queensland in terms of the skilled workforce we require in the state are deliverable with action. In some areas in Queensland we have a youth unemployment rate of more than 20 per cent. This is an indictment on the previous Labor government. Quite rightly the budget was a once-in-a-generation budget and well overdue. That is why investment of up to \$86 million over six years to support 10,000 additional apprentices and investment of \$10 million to fund 500 university scholarships for women in traditionally male dominated fields or in areas experiencing skills shortages administered by Skills Queensland are welcomed. The estimates process allowed review of Skills Queensland and the Skills and Training Taskforce and incentives to attract and keep apprentices.

In terms of my electorate, I was very pleased that the relevant ministers made reference to my need for a review of schooling in Queensland. We welcome the Queensland Schools Plan Commission's review of the need for a state high school at Bargara. This review will allow my community a clear outline on the process and possible timelines. Our children are our most vulnerable Queenslanders. It was pleasing to receive clear and important policies on what is being done to help protect them from abuse and sexual assault. In addition the minister provided a concise update to the committee on how we are addressing bullying in our schools.

The government's commitment to disability services in regional Queensland was reiterated, in particular the acknowledgment of the need for the provision of staff to assist students with autism spectrum disorder. The Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund, which will allow state school parents and citizens

organisations to apply for up to \$160,000 to fix existing priority maintenance issues at their schools, will be great for education outcomes and providing appropriate learning environments for our students. I remind the House that government service delivery can be conducted by QBuild, especially when there is a need to manage risk. I welcome the contestability improvements with the Department of Public works for this organisation. The new asbestos removal initiatives are welcomed and the best agency to deliver this important function for government is QBuild.

The areas of responsibility of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts are administered through the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts and a number of statutory authorities and entities. The statutory authorities are the Queensland Art Gallery, the Queensland Museum, the Queensland Performing Arts Trust, the Queensland Theatre Company and the State Library of Queensland, Library Board of Queensland. The two entities are the Queensland Government Chief Information Office and the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist. The four companies supported by the Arts portfolio are the Aboriginal Centre for Performing Arts, Major Brisbane Festivals, Screen Queensland and the Queensland Music Festival. As part of the committee, it was pleasing to be able to review the budget highlights for the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. A highlight was the establishment of the arts advisory board.

I want to say something about the performance of the estimates committee and the claims made today by the member for Bundamba about the time allocated. I felt a little embarrassed about that. Our committee, with input from the sensible members from the opposition, decided the way the process was to work. I acknowledge the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Opposition for the great way that they worked on the committee. The bipartisan spirit of the committee was excellent. Therefore, I was very disturbed and disappointed that our estimates committee lost its way with verballing of the ministers and staff and verballing of the committee chair. The committee system is valuable and it needs to be treated with respect in the future. Again I congratulate the ministers and staff and look forward to the results from this budget.