




Speech By
Annastacia Palaszczuk

MEMBER FOR INALA

APPROPRIATION BILLS: EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

 **Ms PALASZCZUK** (Inala—ALP) (Leader of the Opposition) (10.00 pm): From the outset, I thank members of the committee and the chair of the Education and Innovation Committee, the member for Burdekin, for doing such a fine job of chairing the committee in a very fair process. I will give credit where credit is due and she handled herself extremely well. I rise to speak on the report of the Education and Innovation Committee's consideration of the 2013-14 portfolio budget estimates. I was concerned by allegations of bullying and intimidation of persons who merely seek to engage in the democratic process by participating in protests and expressing opposition to decisions of the government. I have written to the director-general providing further information, as invited, and requesting that he investigate the concerns contained therein.

The proposed closure of eight Queensland schools was the focus of questioning from opposition members at the estimates hearing. It was reported on 20 July 2013 that the Premier had said—

We have not shut one school to date.

As the minister well knows, the closure of the travelling show school had been gazetted by him last year. The minister's only response was—

I think the honourable member had a chance to ask the Premier that last week.

Unfortunately, at the time of the Premier's estimates hearing, the Premier had not made that comment. When answering questions about the realisation of \$70 million from proposed asset sales when explaining how the shortfall of \$32 million would be met, the director-general said—

There is certainly an opportunity for us to consider other surplus land.

I therefore take this opportunity to invite the minister to give his assurance that this response from the director-general is accurate and only surplus land is being considered for sale at this stage. If not, perhaps he could clarify.

The estimates hearing also saw the farce of the release of the Schools Planning Commission report, and the minister and the director-general clearly demonstrated their lack of knowledge of the contents of the report. Significant problems were identified with the process of identifying schools for closure. The government has put the cart before the horse and considered where schools should be closed before it considered the potential population growth and growth in the school demand in those areas. In relation to the Fortitude Valley State School site, the maps released by the commission show an estimated population growth in this region of two per cent or more over the next 20 years. In addition, the deputy director-general clearly indicated that the two closest schools to Fortitude Valley—Brisbane Central and New Farm—have enrolments that are close to the built environment capacity at the present time. The same situation exists at Toowoomba South State School where the projected population growth will be one per cent per annum and the Charlton and Wyreema areas will experience a growth of two per cent or more per annum.

Funding for early years education is an important part of the responsibility of this government. Increasing participation in kindergarten is fundamental to improving education outcomes for Queensland children. Failure to reach the target rate under the national partnership agreement for 2012 of 86 per cent means we are behind the eight ball in achieving 95 per cent by 2013. What concerns me is the effect failing to reach the target will have on federal government funding. The advice from the department is that Queensland's 2012 performance may influence post NP ECE arrangements and funding. I urge the minister to reassure the parliament that the failure by his government to reach the target and his statement during the estimates hearing will have no impact on potential post arrangements and funding.

Staffing is of course a continued concern for the opposition. The member for Woodridge asked the minister to explain why the SDS shows an increase of 398 full-time equivalents but the SDS highlights claims an increase of 724 teachers and teacher aides. This is apparently because some teachers such as resource teachers in high schools have been asked to go back into the classroom. The budget estimates process showed a minister and director-general who are not across the substantive detail of their portfolio and an ad hoc approach to administration of education that is unequalled, and the minister continues to reject the extra funding offered by the federal government under the Better Schools Plan.