




Speech By  
**Stephen Bennett**

**MEMBER FOR BURNETT**

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**APPROPRIATION BILLS: EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE**

 **Mr BENNETT** (Burnett—LNP) (9.41 pm): It is my pleasure after this year's estimates to support the adoption of the report of the Education and Innovation Committee. It was a pleasure to participate as part of this committee. At the outset I must express my gratitude for the cooperation of all of the members of the committee, including the chair, Rosemary Menkens, member for Burdekin. I also express my thanks to the ministers who appeared before the committee and their respective DGs 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, our newest member, Gregory Thompson, and all of the research officers.

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. All of these portfolios are vital to the economic wellbeing and growth of our state. The other portfolios 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 they are 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 that we face in this term of parliament is the training of our young people. The figures that are coming out of the Wide Bay-Burnett area in particular and across Queensland in terms of the skilled workforce we require are deliverable with action. I welcome the reforms and legislation delivered and introduced in this House.

In some areas in Queensland we have a high youth unemployment rate. That is why the investment of up to \$86 million over six years to support 10,000 additional apprentices and the investment of \$10 million to fund 500 university scholarships for women is welcomed.

In terms of my electorate, I was very pleased that the relevant ministers made reference to the review of schooling in Queensland. We welcome the Queensland Schools Plan Commission's review of the need for state high schools across Queensland. Our children are our most vulnerable Queenslanders. It was pleasing to receive clear and important policies on what is being done by the ministers to help provide a strong future for them. The Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund will allow state school parents and citizens organisations to apply for up to \$160,000 to fix existing priority maintenance issues at their schools and provide appropriate learning environments for our students.

The funding for the Gonski reforms proposed by the federal Labor government which was discussed at estimates comes by taking away money from our local universities. We did not want the funding for our local kindergartens to be cut. The federal government's funding will only continue until December 2014, and then it stops. In last Friday's pre-election economic statement, the federal Labor

government cut \$242 million in funding for apprenticeships and traineeships. In contrast, the Queensland government knows that real differences to our education system are made in the classroom, not the bureaucracy. Our approach is to provide timely and targeted investment in practical measures to improve education through committing \$835 million over five years in additional funding.

In addition to Great Teachers = Great Results and the almost \$6 billion a year already invested in education, the recent Queensland budget also provides for an increase in education expenditure of 6.26 per cent. The Great Teachers = Great Results direct action plan would build on the strength of Queensland's existing school funding model and extend the government's reform agenda to focus on the most important piece of the education system—the teacher. This is about concentrating funding on policies backed with research and challenging the notion that higher funding in itself guarantees success. It is clear that education is central to the economic prosperity of our great state and it creates opportunities for every Queensland student. Teachers play a critical role in the lives of Queensland children by providing them with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve success in their futures. The initiative consists of 15 action items, including a structured annual performance process, mentoring for beginning teachers, accelerated progression and paid postgraduate study for high performing teachers and fast tracking autonomy initiatives for schools.

The areas of responsibility for the minister for the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts are administered through the department and a number of statutory authorities and entities. The statutory authorities are the Queensland Art Gallery; Queensland Museum; Queensland Performing Arts Trust; Queensland Theatre Company; and the State Library 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 Festival, Screen Queensland and the Queensland Music Festival.

As part of the committee it was pleasing to be able to review the budget highlights of the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. I have enjoyed working with the committee members. Some of them are a little bit more difficult than others. But I do want to acknowledge the members for Woodridge and Condamine and the bipartisan spirit of our committee during work and estimates. The committee system is valuable and needs to be treated with respect. I again congratulate the minister's staff and look forward to the results of this budget.