




Speech By

Bruce Saunders

MEMBER FOR MARYBOROUGH

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr SAUNDERS** (Maryborough—ALP) (8.36 pm): I rise to speak to the Appropriation Bill 2015, report No. 4 of the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee and the Commonwealth Games. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my fellow committee members: Scott Stewart, the member for Townsville as the chair; and Dr John McVeigh, the member for Toowoomba South, as the deputy chair. I also acknowledge the hard work put in by the committee research team, Sue Cawcutt and Melissa Salisbury, and the staff of the committee, Marion O'Connor. I would also like to acknowledge the minister, Minister Jones, who did an absolutely fantastic job, as well as the advisers, the staff and the public servants. It was my first estimates process. I was thoroughly enthralled and I really enjoyed the process. It is great for our democratic process to go through the estimates hearings.

The education of our youth is the future of Queensland. I was pleased to note that the Appropriation Bill shows an increase in funding as well as new initiatives from the Palaszczuk Labor government. The 2015-16 budget saw an investment in Education of \$12.4 billion. That is up seven per cent. That is a great thing for Maryborough because, being a low socioeconomic area, it means we are getting more funding. We have got nine new teachers—and thank you, Minister—in our area for this year. There is \$152.4 million over three years and \$86 million ongoing to deliver initiatives under the government's extra teachers policy. It lowers class sizes and supports high schools including hiring up to an additional 875 teachers, including 275 specialist high school teachers beyond normal growth in Queensland state schools.

There is an amount of \$1 million as part of the \$8.9 million over three years to employ 45 additional guidance officers to increase counselling and career advice services for Queensland state high school students. This is very, very important to me because it is the first time that Maryborough State High School will have a guidance officer. It is the first time in the history of that school that we have a full-time guidance officer, and that was delivered by the Palaszczuk Labor government. In addition there is \$70 million for maintenance of existing schools, bringing the total investment to \$178 million in 2015-16 with a further \$230 million invested over three years from 2016-17 for the state school maintenance program. Education is the most important thing to lift the standard of living in my electorate. I congratulate the education minister on delivering for the electorate of Maryborough. Thank you very much, Minister.

Just as education is key for future investment in our great state, the entrepreneurs of tomorrow play a vital economic role in keeping Queensland going. I was pleased to see the budget deliver \$1 million over three years for structured entrepreneurialship and IT skill learning programs to primary and secondary schools across Queensland as well as \$1 million over three years in grants to assist stay-at-home parents develop home based businesses.

Since that has been announced, my office has had lots of queries. It is a very good policy and once again I congratulate the Palaszczuk government for thinking ahead and keeping Queensland on

the straight and narrow. This is a welcome initiative by the government, providing support for the young entrepreneurs of tomorrow—

Mr Rickuss: How many people will get that grant?

Mr SAUNDERS: I will take that interjection. I think plenty of people will get it, because they would not have had the opportunity under the LNP. As a regional member I understand how vital investment is for tourism and small business. It is often the backbone, and in my area tourism is a very big part of the economy. The increased tourism funding from the Palaszczuk government will keep events such as Relish and the Mary Poppins festival alive in my electorate. These could have been in jeopardy had the LNP continued in government because, as we all know, they had slashed funding for tourism which was supposed to be one of the pillars of their economy. As a regional member who has many tourism events, it would have had devastating effects.

This is a government which is here to assist small businesses, with \$4.7 million in 2015-16 to continue to enhance and transform how the Queensland government delivers online services. This government is committed to listening to small businesses, and as a former small business owner I know that this government is on the right track. It is maintaining the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council. The council will provide direct input to the government on issues facing the small business sector.

Again I would like to thank all those who participated in this process for their hard work and commitment to Queensland education, tourism and small business and the Commonwealth Games. I would like to personally thank the minister for her hard work and for delivering for my electorate.