




Speech By
Tim Mander

MEMBER FOR EVERTON

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APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL; APPROPRIATION BILL

 **Mr MANDER** (Everton—LNP) (3.21 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Appropriation Bill 2015. I want to explain to the House why this budget fails for the hardworking families who live in my electorate of Everton, fails for the people who live in my wider region and fails for Queenslanders regardless of where they live. Let me first focus on the electorate of Everton and why this Labor budget has manifestly failed them.

Apart from delivering absolutely nothing for them, it was even worse because it did nothing to address the issues that families in my electorate battle with day in, day out. This government says it is all about jobs. In fact, the Treasurer mentioned the word 'jobs' 40 times in his budget speech, magically thinking that mentioning it enough times will actually create jobs. His own budget forecast tells us that unemployment will remain high, at 6.5 per cent. The only job creation initiatives that were outlined in this budget were 3,000 new Public Service jobs, a 5.3 per cent increase in the size of the Public Service which will amount to an extra \$1 billion expense to the budget. One would think that with the history of debt from the previous Labor government, mainly through increasing the size of the Public Service, they had learnt their lessons from the past.

Another huge issue in my area, which I know is an issue in many Brisbane suburban electorates, is that of traffic congestion. In my electorate there are a couple of very bad bottlenecks which mean that more and more people are spending more and more time in their cars, whether they are dropping the kids off at school or going to work, wasting valuable family time as well as wasting petrol as they are in the car on the road so much. It really troubles me that in this budget nothing whatsoever has been allocated to the roads of Everton, particularly Old Northern Road, which runs outside my electorate office, which is situated on the corner of South Pine Road and Stafford Road. If honourable members have not noticed it before, there is a lovely picture of me there. This has to be one of the most congested areas of Brisbane. This would be one of the worst bottlenecks in Brisbane and not one bit of money has been allocated towards that. That is something that my electorate will remember and something that I will remind them about.

Let's talk about the schools in my electorate. Going through the booklet showing what capital expenditure has been allocated to the schools—surprise, surprise—I note that not one school in my electorate has received any allocation of funding, and I know there is a number of LNP electorates in the same situation. I hope it is only coincidental that 60 per cent of the capital funding for schools has gone to Labor electorates when they only hold 48 per cent of the seats. I am sure that is a coincidence. I turn to Everton Park State High School, and the member for Noosa is a former student. He ranks with Geoffrey Rush as one of the former greats of the school.

Mr Bleijie: Oh, come on!

Mr MANDER: Sorry, the former minister is a little bit above Geoffrey Rush. Everton Park State High School fought a really good battle when the legitimate question was asked about the future of the school when they have a facility that is designed for 1,100 kids and there are only 250 kids at the school and it has been that way for some time. We put up a very rational argument to the then minister for the school to continue to remain open. Part of that was to sell off a portion of the land, which the school is absolutely in favour of. Why? Because they want a refurbishment of their very aged facilities; they want this to be a modern school and they want to be able to rebuild the school. Again, it saddens me that there is no allocation whatsoever, no capital funding allocated to the refurbishment at Everton Park State High School. They are very upset by that and, again, that is a great disappointment.

I am pleased that, in the budget, after much lobbying, the Labor government has agreed to support a couple of projects in the social services sector. I do want to thank the former minister and member for Aspley for her support of a couple of projects under the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial. We have a facility planned in Albany Creek; land was donated to Youngcare when I was the Minister for Housing and Public Works. It is great to see that funding has been provided so that program by MS Queensland can help those adults with a disability. I am eagerly waiting for this project to be signed off. I would ask the Minister for Housing and Public Works to expedite this as quickly as possible. There is a vacant block of land that needs to be used, and what better cause could there be?

At the other end of my electorate, at Mitchelton, \$1 million under the Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial has been allocated to Wesley Mission, who are building 15 units of accommodation for adults with mental disabilities. I am really proud to have this in my electorate. I am really proud of the surrounding areas that are happy to have this facility looking after these people who do have a disability.

The budget has been quite disappointing for my electorate, but that does not come as any surprise. Similarly, it has been quite disappointing in the education and training space as well, my shadow portfolio. The minister made a number of announcements in this space. She boasted that this is a typical Labor government budget. I do not agree with her on many things, but this is one thing on which I do agree with her. It is a typical Labor government budget and Labor's solution to everything is to mindlessly throw money at it. The union puppetmasters have determined what will take place in the education space and they have demanded a return on their investment and this minister has delivered it in spades. When will the ALP learn that it is not the amount of money that is important but where the money is actually directed that is the most important thing? Some of the rubbish that has been espoused about the previous LNP government's term in the education sector is exactly that: rubbish.

Of course there was no sacking of teachers. The student-teacher ratios were the best they had been in decades. You would have noticed that during the recent election campaign the education unions were relatively quiet because they had nothing to complain about. The schools were happy with the policy directions and that is the reason that the unions were very quiet, but \$180 million has been ripped out of the programs that were initiated by the previous government.

One of these programs is Great Teachers = Great Results, which was all about making sure that we improve teacher quality. Every bit of research says that if we want to improve student outcomes we need to improve teaching quality, so we introduced 300 master teachers across the state. Mentors for first-year teachers were also very well received. We aimed to cut red tape through this program and give schools more autonomy at the local level to give schools the chance to become more independent, and all of these things were incredibly well received. But the unions hated Great Teachers = Great Results because it gave decision-making powers to the locals and away from centralised control, which they absolutely abhorred.

Perhaps Labor are going to use the \$180 million that they have taken out of this successful program and allocate it to something that the Treasurer has mentioned in the budget: enhanced middle management. That is a proud thing to have in your budget! Who would take money out of the pockets of state and private school principals to pay for middle management bureaucrats who will supposedly help deliver the curriculum of the future? Who in their right mind in this day and age shouts from the rooftops that they will provide enhanced middle management? You would swear this is an episode of *Utopia*. Will more middle management help our kids read and write better? I do not think so.

One of the other great programs that the previous minister introduced—which has been incredibly successful and one that I mentioned yesterday—was the Great Results Guarantee. For those of you who are not aware of this, the Great Results Guarantee was federal money that some refer to as the Gonski money. It was not imaginary money of the future; it was actually allocated in the forward estimates. When the Rudd-Gillard government asked the states to sign up to the Gonski reforms there is one thing that the other side of the House continues to forget: as part of that deal each state had to match \$1 billion in years 5 and 6, which would have been totally irresponsible with the debt levels that we had. When we did not sign up for Gonski, the Rudd-Gillard government took \$797 million away from

Queensland schools. Thank goodness the Abbott government got in and gave us that money back, and we then directed it to the Great Results Guarantee.

What is incredibly interesting is that the Minister for Education—who has been banging on in this House about how she is going to keep going to the Abbott government to ensure they get that imaginary Gonski money in years 5 and 6—has forgotten one thing, and that is that Bill Shorten does not give a ‘Gonski’ about Gonski because he acknowledges and realises how irresponsible that promise is. I would say to the Minister for Education that, before you go to Tony Abbott, go to Bill Shorten and get a guarantee for this so-called imaginary Gonski money.

If you have been in any school at all over the last three years, you will understand that this Great Results Guarantee money has been one of the most effective education policies in decades. This money has been very well received and it is a program that we would like to see continue into the future. Yesterday I asked a question of the minister about the future of Gonski money and she was very tricky with her answer. I asked, ‘Is the Gonski money going to be there in 2016?’ Of course when you are talking about budgets you are talking about financial years. The minister very cleverly pointed to page 12 of Budget Paper No. 4, where it states quite clearly that there is no money allocated for the Great Results Guarantee in 2016-17, 2017-18 or 2018-19. Next year we were going to commit \$299 million to the Great Results Guarantee.

I am encouraged that the minister has said she agrees with the Great Results Guarantee and acknowledges that it has been a good program, but there is no commitment beyond June 2016. I am asking the minister to make an unequivocal commitment that the \$797 million that came from the federal government will go towards the Great Results Guarantee. I suspect that the money is not in here because they want to keep it up their sleeves in case their union masters say that they want that money directed somewhere else. This matter could quite easily be put to bed tomorrow if the minister would just come out and say that the \$797 million will go towards one of the most effective education policies in the history of the Queensland education department.

I was very flattered by this budget, because my policy as the former housing and public works minister for the maintenance of government buildings was such a good one that Labor has copied it. We stopped the stranglehold that QBuild had on maintenance in schools, because the schools had no option but to go to QBuild. I am glad that the Treasurer has recognised this is an effective policy, because it gave them the option to go to their local tradies, who then had the opportunity to do this work at a far more cost-effective rate than QBuild could in the past. I thank the minister and I congratulate her for keeping that policy and ensuring that our local tradies have the chance to be involved with school maintenance.

There have been grand announcements about ‘rescuing’ TAFE. The government is throwing \$34.5 million over the next four years to restore TAFE Queensland to its rightful place as the premier provider of VET in Queensland. As I mentioned yesterday, Labor is standing back and throwing large amounts of money at a broken system and dumping the very good solution that the LNP had to fix it because their union bosses once again did not like this. You cannot argue the fact that, over the past 12 months, the number of VET places across the public and private sectors has increased by five per cent. The system has worked, and it beggars belief that this government can stand before the people of Queensland with a straight face and claim that it is all about jobs now and into the future. To make matters worse, Labor is going to recklessly throw \$314.5 million over four years—or almost \$80 million a year—at programs to boost skills and training and not one single job will be created.

This budget is underwhelming, unimaginative and does nothing to create jobs or reduce debt. I would urge the Treasurer to read the transcript of the opposition leader’s budget reply speech where he spoke about a real plan for the future that only the LNP can deliver.